

SEEDS FOR PEACE:  
VISIONARY PLANTING IN THE NUCLEAR AGE

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the Faculty of the School of Theology  
at Claremont

In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Doctor of Ministry

by  
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*This professional project, completed by*

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*has been presented to and accepted by the Faculty  
of the School of Theology at Claremont in partial  
fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of*

**DOCTOR OF MINISTRY**

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## ABSTRACT

The thesis of this paper claims that imagination is the essential key to the transformation needed in order to critically, hopefully, and fully assume the task of our prophetic ministry in today's world. A serious lack of prophetic vision in the life and mission of the church has led to a complacent acceptance of the status quo and an unwillingness to risk change.

In his book, Imagination, Harold Rugg insists that "the key to the nature of the creative act lies in giving up long-held presuppositions and in beginning again with a new orientation." And there can be no creative act without the use of imagination. It is the work of imagination to confront every what-is with what-might-be.

In order to focus on the church's prophetic task of envisioning new and alternative possibilities, this project will examine the role of imagination in history from both a psychological and a theological perspective, and explore its role in the creative act that affects change in society.

Peacemaking as a Christian ethic in the nuclear age will be examined from a historical and contemporary perspective in the second chapter. In the third chapter we will show that prophetic imagination and peacemaking must embrace one another in hope for an alternative future.

The final chapter will describe the Shalom Congregations Program as one concrete way of involving our churches in the prophetic task of peacemaking and of living toward a vision of shalom.

## CHAPTER 1

## IMAGINATION: KEY TO NEW POSSIBILITIES

It is at the level of the imagination that the fateful issues of our new world-experience must first be mastered. It is here that culture and history are broken, and here that the church is polarized. Old words do not reach across the new gulfs, and it is only in vision and oracle that we can chart the unknown and new-name the creatures.<sup>1</sup>

If these words of Amos Wilder are in any way a correct observation of our present human situation, then it is absolutely necessary that attention be given to the whole area of imagination and its function in the development of the whole person. Perhaps we have too long ignored this aspect of our psyche, and have therefore stifled our creativity.

This is one person's attempt to better understand the nature and use of imagination in one's spiritual journey and prophetic ministry. I will endeavor to explore this subject both from a psychological and theological perspective, although it will be impossible to separate them completely, and then to focus on the implications discovered for the life of the Christian community, especially in terms of addressing the ethical issue of peacemaking in our world with hope for the future. Even as I pursue this issue I am well aware of the momentous task ahead, and will acknowledge at the outset that it will be impossible to

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<sup>1</sup>Amos Niven Wilder, Theopoetic (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1976), p. 1.

explore all the aspects and implications of the human imagination in the limited scope of this paper. Perhaps I should heed the words of Immanuel Kant:

Imagination . . . is an art hidden in the depths of the human soul, whose true processes we shall hardly ever extract from nature and bring unveiled to view . . . <sup>2</sup>

Although there is probably much truth and wisdom in his statement, I am much too intrigued with the idea that a vivid and healthy imagination is absolutely necessary if we are to reach new heights, "leap" across yet uncrossed chasms, and explore new and uncharted possibilities. I cannot resist the temptation to understand how it is involved in every person's creative ability, for I believe with Wilder that "it is at the level of imagination that any full engagement with life takes place."<sup>3</sup>

### Psychological Perspective

To fully understand the meaning of an idea or concept perhaps the dictionary is not the best place to look, but it does provide a starting point. In this case, it was the last source that I sought in order to define the word "imagination," but the definition found in this particular dictionary offers some beginning insights. Imagination is "the act or power of forming mental images of what is not actually present; the act or power of creating mental images of what has never been actually

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<sup>2</sup>Immanuel Kant, Critique of Pure Reason (New York: Dutton, 1934), p. 137.

<sup>3</sup>Wilder, p. 2.



experienced, or of creating new images or ideas by combining previous experiences."<sup>4</sup>

From this primary definition we will proceed to additional, more complex ideas of its meaning proposed by others who have explored this fascinating subject. Ray L. Hart in his elaborate treatment of the ontology and rhetoric of revelation expands the usual definition of imagination.

Imagination is both a cognitive and an ontic power, participating in the very being of dominions it opens upon. One could say that imagination engages those levels of being in which our creativity is involved, which require human response for the maturation of their kind and act of being. It is the mental power of that agency whereby the self puts more into the world than it takes out of it; it is the mental medium of the one ontically active and passive power we grasp from the inside, viz., the will. To this extent, imagination is actively effective in those emergent levels of reality in which the will is ingredient and modified.<sup>5</sup>

It may seem strange at this point to associate imagination with the will, but Hart is not alone in stressing this association. John Cobb strongly agrees that the will in its most characteristic activity "employs reason and imagination to determine what the possible alternatives are and to evaluate their consequences."<sup>6</sup> I do not wish to explore all of its many relationships, but merely want to indicate that the imagination is closely related to and not independent of other aspects of the psyche.

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<sup>4</sup>David B. Guralnic, ed., Webster's New World Dictionary (New York: World, 1970), p. 700.

<sup>5</sup>Ray L. Hart, Unfinished Man and the Imagination: (New York: Herder & Herder, 1968), p. 136.

<sup>6</sup>John B. Cobb, Jr., "Strengthening the Spirit," Union Seminary Quarterly Review 30 (Winter-Summer 1975), 132-133.

Imagination may truly be defined as the act or power of creating mental images of what is not actually present, but it is as "definite as any one of the physical senses and infinitely more important in its range and operation. For by imagination we form mental pictures of objects before we think them, and only by constant recourse to these pictures does the mind proceed to know and to comprehend."<sup>7</sup> It also should not be confined simply to "seeing," as the popular usage of the term suggests. Imagination may operate in terms of any of the five senses and not merely by sight alone. In some persons, auditory imagery is as vivid as visual imagery is for others.<sup>8</sup>

It should be evident by now that imagination cannot be defined in a precise and definite statement. Perhaps it is enough to say that it should not be used indiscriminately and synonymously with words like "fantasy" and "illusion." Like many other terms used to describe mental processes it has been analyzed: "It is not an unknown or mysterious power of the mind, except in so far as all mental powers, whether of perception or judgment or deduction are ultimately mysterious; we know them by usage, not by understanding."<sup>9</sup>

Let us then explore some of the many usages of the imagination before embarking on several of the theories behind

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<sup>7</sup>Samuel Parks Cadman, Imagination and Religion (New York: Macmillan, 1926), p. 117.

<sup>8</sup>Lindsay Dewar, Imagination and Religion (Milwaukee: Morehouse, 1922), p. 3.

<sup>9</sup>K. W. Wild, Intuition (Cambridge: University Press, 1938), p. 8.

its function. Harold Rugg is one of the better known authorities on imagination who is often quoted by those doing a study on this subject. One of the important functions of imagination, according to Rugg, is that it is the instrument of discovery. He elaborates this idea by describing what he means by discovery. "Discovery is conceiving in imagination, or, more succinctly, discovery is imagined conception."<sup>10</sup> Whitehead stresses the success of what he calls "imaginative rationalization" as a method for the discovery of metaphysics, and describes this method in the following way:

The true method of discovery is like the flight of an aeroplane. It starts from the ground of particular observation; it makes a flight in the thin air in imaginative generalization; and it again lands for renewed observation rendered acute by rational interpretation.<sup>11</sup>

In this rather poetic way, Whitehead points to the basic function of imagination, not only for rational interpretation, but for all areas of life where discovery is not only possible but necessary for human growth and development.

Imagination is the universal and indispensable instrument of all levels of living in the human world. Our daily lives are dependent on it. . . . In fact, the principal function of the imagination is to enable the human being constantly to build thought models of the real world.<sup>12</sup>

This creative function of the imagination will be discussed at greater length in a later section of this paper. I only want to

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<sup>10</sup>Harold Ordway Rugg, Imagination (New York: Harper & Row, 1963), p. 36.

<sup>11</sup>Alfred North Whitehead, Process and Reality (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1970), p. 7.

<sup>12</sup>Rugg, p. 37.

point out several of its main functions without elaborating upon them at this time.

One of the other important uses of the imagination is in connection with memory or the reproduction of the past. Imagination is also essential in the whole concept of play, as especially seen in childhood. It is equally as necessary for creative problem-solving and psychotherapy, as well as mental and physical health. It is highly possible that Lindsay Dewar, writing over forty years ago on imagination and religion, was correct when he claimed that a person's "imagination molds his (her) life, body and soul."<sup>13</sup>

Without hesitation I can agree that few subjects are so complex and bewildering as the concept of imagination. I can also accept the warning that "one should not put 'imagination' in his conceptual diet if he has little stomach for circularities, for the tendency of one thing to be led into its opposite and back again endlessly." With this warning well established in my mind, I shall nevertheless attempt to give a brief sketch of some of the theories on imagination throughout history and in contemporary thought in order to gain some perspective on developing a theory necessary for my own use.

Before we actually reflect on various theories, I would like first of all to explain what is meant by theory of imagination. A theory may mean different things to different persons, but I find that Harold Rugg's meaning is an adequate one

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<sup>13</sup>Dewar, p. 12.

to follow. He proposes that a theory is "the best imagined model we can conceive of a given situation. It is our imagined conception of how a given thing or act or situation might work or be explained."<sup>14</sup> Even to develop a theory one must conceive a model in one's own imagination.

Most of my limited understanding of the different theories of imagination in the past was extracted from Sartre's Imagination: A Psychological Critique, since it would have been impossible to read all of the original sources at this time. It seems that Descartes and Hume conceived of the participation of images in the sensory in two entirely different ways. Descartes' theory is located at the psychophysiological level based on the dualistic idea of mind and body. Therefore, an image is an idea formed by the soul (mind) on the occasion of a modification of the body. On the other hand, Hume began with the immediate data of experience, ignoring the body.<sup>15</sup> Whitehead's criticism of Hume's theory is that Hume never allows imagination freedom.<sup>16</sup> This criticism is in part based on Whitehead's conception of free imagination in which the "conceptual novelties search through a universe in which they are not datively exemplified."<sup>17</sup> I mention Whitehead's criticism only to demonstrate the complexity and variation of theories as conceived by the great philosophers down through the ages. Hume himself

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<sup>14</sup>Rugg, p. 240.

<sup>15</sup>Jean Paul Sartre, Imagination (Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press, 1972), pp. 106-107.

<sup>16</sup>Whitehead, p. 245.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid.

thought that he was allowing the imagination much freedom as the following statement indicates:

Nothing is more free than the imagination of man; and though it cannot exceed that original stock of ideas, furnished by the internal and external sense, it has unlimited power of mixing, compounding, separating, and dividing these ideas, in all the varieties of fiction and vision.<sup>18</sup>

Without elaborating further on the many theories in the past, perhaps it is only necessary to point out that the classical and neoclassical theories did not encourage the free play of imagination. A different conception of the character and function of the imagination was introduced by the romantic theory of art.<sup>19</sup>

In romantic thought the theory of poetic imagination had reached its climax. Imagination is no longer that special activity which builds up the human world of art. It now has universal metaphysical value. Poetic imagination is the only clue to reality.<sup>20</sup>

Many of the later theories were reactions to some of the earlier theories. Sartre credits the first major contribution toward an adequate psychology of the human imagination to the late Edmund Husserl, the twentieth-century pioneer of modern phenomenology and important figure in the formation of Gestalt psychology. Developing Husserl's theory, Sartre concludes that the imagination is "the whole of consciousness as it realized its

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<sup>18</sup>David Hume, Essays and Treatises on Various Subjects (Boston: Mendum, 1981), p. 38.

<sup>19</sup>Ernst Cassirer, An Essay of Man (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1944), p. 152.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., p. 155.

freedom."<sup>21</sup> This leads him to a further conclusion about the relationship of consciousness and the imagination: ". . . imagination, far from appearing as an actual characteristic of consciousness, turns out to be an essential and transcendental condition of consciousness."<sup>22</sup>

According to Jung, imagination has not always had a very credible place in the thinking of many psychologists. He reflects upon Freud and Adler's opinion that imagination is only a "symbolic" veil disguising the tendencies or the primitive desires presupposed by them. For practical reasons, Jung claims a more significant role for the imagination.

Imagination is the creative source of all that has made progress possible to human life. Imagination holds in itself an irreducible value, for it is the psychic function whose roots ramify at the same time in the contents of the conscious mind and of the unconscious, in the collective as in the individual.<sup>23</sup>

My purpose here is not to fully understand and appropriate all of the theories of imagination throughout history, but rather to merely catch a glimpse of some earlier views in order to put into perspective some of the contemporary thoughts and to acknowledge that this is not a subject discussed just in recent times.

The three contemporary theories that I wish to examine seem to represent current thinking of those who have done some of

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<sup>21</sup>Jean-Paul Sartre, The Psychology of Imagination (New York: Citadel Press, 1961), p. 271.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid, p. 273.

<sup>23</sup>Carl Jung, Two Essays on Analytical Psychology (Cleveland: World, 1956), p. 299.

the most extensive work on the subject of imagination. Harold Rugg attempts to explain where the imagination occurs, namely in the "magic threshold" which he calls the transliminal mind. This is supposedly the critical threshold of the conscious-nonconscious continuum on which all of life is lived.<sup>24</sup> He develops a two-fold symbolic act theory that encompasses both gesture and language, thus embracing the nonverbal as well as the linguistic situations of life.<sup>25</sup>

Rubem Alves has a very future-oriented theory of imagination which is reflected in the title of his book, Tomorrow's Child. First of all, he claims that imagination and personality cannot be separated because "personality is imagination made flesh."<sup>26</sup> The main thesis of his book argues that man "has the unique possibility of using his past as a tool for the creation of a qualitatively new future."<sup>27</sup> In other words, persons are not bound to their past; they are creative, open, unfinished and this is made possible by what Alves calls imagination. He does not spend much time reflecting on how the imagination works, but rather on what it can enable persons to do and become. We shall return to Alves' concept of imagination and its importance a little later, when we examine the implications for spiritual growth and creative change.

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<sup>24</sup>Rugg, pp. 39-40.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., p. 308.

<sup>26</sup>Rubem A. Alves, Tomorrow's Child (New York: Harper & Row, 1972), p. 140.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., p. 168.



The third theory of imagination that I wish to mention is that developed by Ray L. Hart in his exciting book, Unfinished Man and the Imagination. His view of imagination is much like Alves', offering a way for persons to change any given situation. Hart claims that although imagination is within the spectrum of mental acts, "it is not alone a mode of cognition but also and fundamentally a way of being human. Imaginative being is accelerated being-toward, the projection of oneself toward his own most potency."<sup>28</sup> It is necessary, however, to point out that Hart does not view imagination as only that which creates a future, but he also stresses the importance of the past.

Imagination is therefore inelectuabably bound up with the historical possibilities of human being. With that is not a license to invent ex nihilo; it cannot, in an undemented self, intend a world that is not bound to the historical past it renews; indeed, renewal means the disclosure of ontological possibility funded in the ontic, temporal past, that now must be brought forward historically.<sup>29</sup>

These three theories are by no means an exhaustive summary of all contemporary thought on imagination, but I hope they will suffice as a basis upon which to develop the thesis of this paper.

There are many ways that we use imagination in our daily lives, but before embarking on this adventuresome journey let us explore the earliest use of imagery by primitive cultures. Because primitive, pre-civilized, preliterate persons lived

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<sup>28</sup>Hart, p. 184.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid., p. 225.

their existence in integral connection with their environment, their basic consciousness was visual. Everything was thought, felt, and lived visually. It was the way they related to the world. With the development of language and writing, rational thought took a dominant role. Soon there was a separation from nature, and thus a loss of what was once a dominant aspect of the human psyche. Only a few special persons employed techniques deliberately designed to enhance visual powers such as shamans of primitive tribes, priests of Hellenic civilization, alchemists and saints of medieval time, and mystics, artist and psychics of all ages.<sup>30</sup>

In spite of this loss of imagination in most of our civilized cultures, the gift is still present in early childhood. Children's best loved and most absorbing occupation is play in which they create a world of their own and rearrange the things of their world in a new way that pleases them.<sup>31</sup> The child at play does not live in the same world of rigid empirical facts as the adult. The child's world has a much greater mobility and transmutability.<sup>32</sup> When Jesus admonished us to become as little children, perhaps he was not asking us to become helpless or child-like in the sense of being innocents but rather was inviting us to join the game (play) of freedom

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<sup>30</sup>Mike and Nancy Samuels, Seeing With the Mind's Eye (New York: Random House, 1975), pp. 12-13.

<sup>31</sup>Sigmund Freud, On Creativity and the Unconscious (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1958), pp. 44-45.

<sup>32</sup>Cassirer, p. 164.

and creativity.<sup>33</sup>

Play is not the sole possession of the child. A sense of play, which always involves our imaginative capacity, is necessary for adults to be fully human.

This capacity keeps us in touch with the roots of reality so that we are able to keep our bearings and find meaning and purpose. Our sense of the sacred, which provides our direction in life, undoubtedly springs from the merger of the playful with the imaginative.<sup>34</sup>

The desire to play is not an unfortunate accident in the development of man; it is an expression of the deepest aspirations of the human soul.<sup>35</sup>

In searching for material on the use of imagination in childhood, I was appalled to find that in most childhood psychology books this subject could only be found under the headings of such topics as "fantasy," "daydreaming," and "illusion." This is a sad commentary on our times that is hopefully being corrected by persons like Edith Cobb who has written a book entitled The Ecology of Imagination in Childhood, which was unavailable to me at the time of my research.

In play we merely rearrange and redistribute the materials given to sense perception, but the artist is constructive and creative in another sense. The playing child only exchanges the actual things of his/her environment for other possible things, but "the artist dissolves the hard stuff

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<sup>33</sup>Alves, p. 39.

<sup>34</sup>Morton Kelsey, The Other Side of Silence (New York: Paulist Press, 1976), p. 187.

<sup>35</sup>Alves, p. 123.

of things in the crucible of his imagination, and the result of this process is the discovery of a new world of poetical, musical, or plastic forms."<sup>36</sup> This never means that the imagination creates out of vacuum for "its stuff is always fact of some order, somehow experienced; its product is that fact transmuted."<sup>37</sup>

"By using the powers of observation, analysis, and comparison, the artist finds something in his object with which he is familiar in his own character; then he deduces, and so creates or comprehends a character."<sup>38</sup> This does not happen all at once. There are stages necessary for the creative act to be actualized. Although these stages will vary slightly, the four stages described by Dr. G. Wallis, a psychologist, are widely accepted by researchers in the field of creativity. The first stage is preparation, in which one consciously collects data and methodically files away potential images. The second stage, a critical one, is called incubation, in which one releases conscious hold on the problem. Illumination is the third stage in which the solution or inspiration spontaneously occurs, often at an unexpected moment. This is the moment of discovery. The fourth and final stage is called verification or revision, at which time details are worked out and ideas are manifested in form or structure.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>36</sup>Cassirer, p. 164.

<sup>37</sup>John Livingston Lowes, The Road to Xanadu (Boston: Houghton, 1927), p. 427.

<sup>38</sup>Wild, p. 7.

<sup>39</sup>Samuels, pp. 239-140.

Creativity is not reserved for the artist alone; it is "a natural manifestation of life" in all persons.<sup>40</sup> It is important in our everyday life of speaking, writing, story-telling, problem-solving and recreation. The most common kind of visualization that people experience is found in the use of memory. We remember or visualize that which we have once experienced; therefore, imagination "becomes a necessary element of true recollection."<sup>41</sup> Eidetic images are an especially vivid form of memory images, and are most frequently experienced by school-age children. The word "eidetic" comes from the Greek noun of the verb "to see." Eidetic imagery is an experience similar to the phenomenon referred to as photographic memory. An eidetic imager can scan the picture in his mind and report back precise details as if he were still looking at the external image.<sup>42</sup> Not everyone can experience this kind of memory visualization, but all of us do remember with the help of our imaginations.

Imagination is also the way persons can use their past as a tool for the creation of a qualitatively new future.<sup>43</sup> Our past is not dead and gone. "Our being-now is in part a being-from the past and a being-toward the past."<sup>44</sup> In one respect the past is made, and we are made with and by it, but in another way the legacy of the past is precisely the challenge of

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<sup>40</sup>Ibid., p. 240.

<sup>41</sup>Cassirer, p. 52.

<sup>42</sup>Samuels, p. 43.

<sup>43</sup>Alves, p. 168.

<sup>44</sup>Hart, p. 189.

the future. What can we make of it?

To think of the future and to live in the future is a necessary part of our nature,<sup>45</sup> thus making it necessary to engage in anticipatory imagination. "Imagination gives birth to a new creation,"<sup>46</sup> and because of imagination life can always begin again. There are always new possibilities, and persons are free to go on exploring the infinite possibilities of the future.

If humankind possessed the gift of imagination in primitive times to an unlimited extent, why was that gift lost? "It would seem that the use and development of visualization has occurred in inverse proportion to the development of language and a written structure for recording."<sup>47</sup> As humans grew in their ability to verbalize they began to lose their ability to see in their "mind's eye." Children likewise have vivid imaginations until they too gain the ability to use words as symbols. Lindsay Dewar goes so far as to say that "this capacity for experiencing visual imagery is damaged, and often completely destroyed, by abstract thinking."<sup>48</sup>

Another reason for our loss of imagination, especially in Western culture, is that although logic and imagination go hand in hand, we have put logic on a pedestal and neglected the value of imagination.<sup>49</sup> We encourage the development of rational and

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<sup>45</sup>Cassirer, p. 53.

<sup>46</sup>Alves, p. 176.

<sup>47</sup>Samuels, p. 13.

<sup>48</sup>Dewar, p. 6.

<sup>49</sup>Kelsey, p. 179.

abstract thinking, but too often discourage the child's day-dreaming, fantasy, and imaginary playmates. Some children are even punished for the inability to distinguish between inner and outer reality, and it takes years to undo the damage that is caused to their imagination even when this restoration is attempted.

Being educated for reality, being made to believe that human wholeness depends on our ability to fit into the social scheme, is a subtle way of diminishing our use of imagination. Once we are thus conditioned, "consciousness cannot imagine freedom as an actuality, or envisage the possibility of repeating the creative act."<sup>50</sup>

Not everyone loses his/her imagination and all of imagination is not lost in everyone, but all of us could have retained more of this gift if we had been encouraged and we still can restore much of it if we seek to do so. Creative imagination is not reserved for a few special persons such as artists, poets, writers, painters, inventors and sages. We all have the potential ability to "see with the mind's eye."

If imagination "enters into our every act,"<sup>51</sup> then it is not only appropriate but essential that we do all that is possible to restore its use. If one pays attention to the imagination one can find a spontaneous creative process working within. As Harold Rugg has so aptly observed, "we have had

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<sup>50</sup>Alves, p. 122.

<sup>51</sup>Maxwell Maltz, Psycho-Cybernetics (New York: Pocket Books, 1969, p. 31.

millions of hours devoted to training in solving problems by reasoning, but almost none devoted to cultivation of the imagination."<sup>52</sup> Not only in problem solving but in all other areas of our lives have we focused on the use and development of other aspects of our psyche, while at the same time ignoring the important role that the imagination plays.

The first necessary step in the development of one's imagination, if it is completely ossified, will be to step over its own corpse.<sup>53</sup> This makes the first step the most difficult. Morton Kelsey says that one must first of all believe in the importance of thinking and experiencing in images in order to develop one's imagination. Once this is accomplished, then the individual must take enough time in quiet to break away from immediate concern with the outer-space realm.<sup>54</sup> At this point, he leaves it up to every individual to find the best suited technique as a way of awakening the imagination. It is true that one's own personality will determine the best way for this to happen, but there are helpful guidelines that one can follow, some of which are suggested by Kelsey.

Since imagination is primarily the act of power of creating visual images, though not confined exclusively to this sense perception, we will for the present concentrate on developing visual imagery. After finding a quiet physical and mental place, body relaxation is a preliminary step in learning

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<sup>52</sup>Rugg, p. 310.

<sup>53</sup>Hart, p. 243.

<sup>54</sup>Kelsey, p. 180.



how to improve the ability to visualize.<sup>55</sup> There are several techniques that one can practice in order to achieve this relaxation. Mike and Nancy Samuels suggest a variety of them in their excellent book on the history, techniques and uses of visualization, Seeing With the Mind's Eye. They also stress the necessity of concentration, to fix the mind on one thought or image and to hold it there; and seeing, which involves not only the eye but also the mind.

In order to develop one's ability to see one must first of all look with awareness and alertness at whatever is in their visual field. Another way to develop this ability is to look at an object from different mental points of view, as well as from different physical vantage points. "Here" and "now" seeing is another useful exercise, which involves concentrating only on what is immediately in your field of vision. Still another method designed to improve visual awareness is called "daVinci's Device," so named because it was suggested by Leonardo daVinci. This method involves looking at patterns, such as cracks in the wall, clouds in the sky, or stains made by paint or water, and allowing the mind to play upon them, inventing one object after another.<sup>56</sup>

Other ways of enhancing one's imagination could also be suggested. Meditation and guided imagery will allow for unlimited use of the imagination, although it takes some ability

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<sup>55</sup>Samuels, p. 106.

<sup>56</sup>Ibid., pp. 106-116.

to use visual imagery before beginning. It is also possible to start with dream images, or by looking at a picture, or drawing or painting or modeling. Some people find that weaving or gardening may bring out this contact with the depth of imagination.<sup>57</sup> The important thing is to find whatever activity or method that is most helpful in the development of each individual's imagination.

### Theological Perspective

To gain a theological perspective it is necessary that we focus on the role of imagination in Biblical literature, in the life of the early church, and throughout the history of the church.

That imagination plays a big part in prophecy requires no proof. The whole prophetic literature abounds in the most highly imaginative conceptions. The Hebrew prophets are, indeed, unique in the history of the world, because they were men--not one or two, but a long, unbroken succession--gifted with a vivid imagination dominated by a belief in one God.<sup>58</sup>

Although the Hebrew people came out of the same tradition as the primitive cultures mentioned earlier and therefore had the same initial gifts of imagination found in earliest times, the prophets continued to manifest this unique ability to use imagery as few men or women have ever done in Judeo-Christian History. For this reason I have chosen to focus on this period to demonstrate the rich heritage of imagination in the Christian

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<sup>57</sup>Kelsey, p. 184-187.

<sup>58</sup>Dewar, p. 27.

faith. I will also mention its use by various others throughout the Old Testament.

The prophet's imagination was largely visual. They saw, but in some instances they also heard. For example, the book of Amos begins, "The words of Amos which he saw." In contrast, some of the poetry of the prophet Isaiah depends upon the auditory nature of his imagery.<sup>59</sup>

Hart refers to the imagination of the prophets as "deformed" imagination. This means that the essence of God is not seen in a vision of imagination, but rather the imagination receives some form representing God according to some mode of likeness. On this point Hart is agreeing with St. Thomas in claiming that "while the goal of prophetic knowledge is intellectual rather than imaginative vision of God, the intellect can achieve its vision only through images 'impressed' in the deformed imagination by divine agency."<sup>60</sup>

Regardless of the theory that we accept concerning the role of imagination in prophecy, it is clearly evident that this aspect of the psyche was highly visible and well developed in the prophets of the Old Testament.

Highly imaginative imagery . . . is the leading characteristic of prophetic thought, and the concrete and pictorial nature of the Hebrew Language is well-calculated to encourage such imagery. Consequently from first to last the language of the prophets is full of graphic similes and metaphors."<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>59</sup>Ibid., p. 27.

<sup>60</sup>Hart, p. 330.

<sup>61</sup>Dewar, p. 4.

The prophets, however, were not the only ones in the history of the Hebrews who had highly developed imaginations. The Book of Job illustrates the highest flights of the poetic imagination, as well as the poetry of the Psalms. There is little doubt that the Old Testament is "rich with visions, dreams, and revelations."<sup>62</sup> The parables of Jesus are the most vivid examples of the use of imagination found in the New Testament. Not only did the words of Jesus appear in the form of parable but his whole style of teaching was imaginative. "You have eyes to see and see not; ears to hear and hear not," are the complaints of a man of imagination trying to convince an unimaginative world.<sup>63</sup>

It can scarcely be doubted that our Lord possessed the power of vivid visualising. His parables and the graphic form of His teaching afford sufficient proof of this. Moreover, so clearly did He realise the very great importance of visual imagery in teaching, that when a picture did not suggest itself immediately to His mind, He cast about to find one.<sup>64</sup>

In fact, the very language of Jesus danced with vivid imagery.

Jesus also relied upon visual imagination in His dealing with individuals. The best example is found in the way he called the first disciples by portraying them as fishers of men. In dealing with the rich young ruler, he tried to appeal to him by holding before his eyes a picture of the heavenly riches. In healing the sick, Jesus likewise appealed to the imagination as

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<sup>62</sup>Samuels, p. 293.

<sup>63</sup>Wild, p. 216.

<sup>64</sup>Dewar, p. 58.

though saying "imagine yourselves to be well."<sup>65</sup> These are but a few of the unlimited examples found in the Gospels attesting to the important role of imagination played in the life and ministry of Jesus.

It is also suggested by Dewar that the essence of Paul's faith is imagination, beginning with the impact of Stephen's stoning.<sup>66</sup> Whether or not this can be validated, it is hard to imagine that one so influenced by the ministry of Jesus could escape being captured by the importance of the imagination as seen in Jesus' life.

The role of visual imagery is rather apparent in the life of the early church, but in order to trace it throughout later church history it is necessary to focus upon various individuals whose visioned imagination determined Christianity's progress down through the centuries. It is also important to note several influential leaders who discouraged its use in order to see why the imagination has not had a very prominent place throughout much of the church's history.

There was a definite difference in the Eastern and Western approach to visual imagery.

. . . Eastern Christians continued to develop the understanding that by using imagination to reveal the meaning in scripture . . . Meanwhile Western Christendom began to concentrate mainly on images that represent the physical world directly . . .<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>65</sup>Ibid., pp. 64-66.

<sup>66</sup>Ibid., pp. 71-72.

<sup>67</sup>Kelsey, p. 216.

Over fifty years ago, S. Parkes Cadman sadly reflected that "the Western mind is prone to ignore the definite fact that Christianity originated in the imagination of the East."<sup>68</sup>

A few outstanding persons down through the church's history have been rare exceptions to this notable neglect of the role of imagination. St. Augustine developed a theory of imagination that was later combined with St. Thomas Aquinas' doctrines of illumination.<sup>69</sup> While Ignatius Loyola, the founder of the Jesuits, was himself a man with a tremendously vivid imagination,<sup>70</sup> St. Teresa and St. John of the Cross warn against dealing with images. At the same time the teachings of John Calvin were taking hold, which persuaded most Protestants that almost any religious use of images could lead only to error.<sup>71</sup>

In order to find another great religious leader with a vivid imagination, we must look in an entirely different spectrum of the church's history to the founder of Quakerism, George Fox. It is reported that he both heard voices and saw visions.<sup>72</sup>

There are a few others such as John Wesley and John Donne that we should mention who in one way or another at least stirred the imaginations of their followers by the use of visual imagery, but for the most part, the role of imagination in the life of the

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<sup>68</sup>Cadman, p. 170.

<sup>69</sup>Hart, p. 329.

<sup>70</sup>Dewar, p. 131.

<sup>71</sup>Kelsey, p. 142.

<sup>72</sup>Dewar, p. 141.

church throughout its history has been neglected more often than it has been encouraged. Thomas Merton, in his writings about the life of prayer is one of those rare souls who came to realize the constructive uses of imagination in the contemplative life.<sup>73</sup>

The contemporary church has sadly inherited much of this traditional neglect in the use of the imagination. There are many reasons why it has been so easy for this to have occurred. The program for de-mythologizing the New Testament did not help to clarify the relation of theology to the imagination. Neo-orthodoxy also disparaged the imagination in favor of the will, and "the eye of vision in favor of the ear of obedience."<sup>74</sup>

The growth of rationalism likewise reinforced the neglect of the imagination. "Since imagination is essentially irrational, its use came to be feared and experiences involving images were avoided."<sup>75</sup> Although I do not fully agree with Kelsey that the imagination is irrational, I concur with him that the use of images was discarded almost wholesale, without reflecting on their value.<sup>76</sup>

This neglect is also apparent in the use of the Bible. Even though it is a panorama of vision and revelations, "both rational criticism and biblicist literalism have reflected a

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<sup>73</sup>Kelsey, p. 2.

<sup>74</sup>Wilder, p. 54.

<sup>75</sup>Kelsey, p. 129.

<sup>76</sup>Ibid., p. 130.

common penury of imagination."<sup>77</sup> This is unfortunate since the Bible is told mostly in images from history and in teachings that are anything but abstract. Therefore, using the imagination, one can step into the events recorded in the Scriptures.<sup>78</sup>

Until recently, theologians since Schleiermacher have not spoken much, if any, about the role of imagination in religious thought though Wilder claims that even "though theology strictly understood is an intellectual if not a discursive activity yet the work of the greatest theologians has always been shot through with the imagination."<sup>79</sup> Recognizing that this aspect of our psyche has been badly neglected, if not in actuality then in emphasis, Wilder proposes a new and different kind of theology which he calls "creative theopoetic."

A creative theopoetic is called for, therefore, not only to visualize a traditional theology but also to relate out of Christian experience to the new sensibility of our time and its images and cults.<sup>80</sup>

There is some evidence that theologians are beginning to realize the important role of imagination in spiritual formation. Process theology, influenced by the philosophical thought of Alfred North Whitehead, has offered a metaphysics which allows for imagination to take its rightful place alongside reason, will and emotion.

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<sup>77</sup>Wilder, p. 49-50.

<sup>78</sup>Kelsey, p. 188.

<sup>79</sup>Wilder, p. 3.

<sup>80</sup>Ibid., p. 7.



Ray L. Hart focuses on the ontology and rhetoric of revelation, placing a strong emphasis on the role of imagination in theological thinking.

Of especial importance for theology are those functions of imagination which preserve and actuate the force of the "paradigmatic event" in historical selfhood. In quasi-whiteheadian language, a paradigmatic event is a "special occasion" in its constitutive and elucidatory power for other and subsequent occasions. It is the event that "keeps on happening"; in the deepest ranges of the self and society, that makes possible other events of a certain sort and so gives direction to personal and political destiny, and that illuminates other events by giving them a "hub" or center of reference.<sup>81</sup>

Although Hart strongly emphasizes the role of imagination in his writings on revelation, it is interesting to note that Paul Tillich, though a man of imaginative thought, does not even once mention the term "imagination" in his chapter on "The Reality of Revelation" in Systematic Theology.

Another process theologian who places strong emphasis on the importance of the imagination for spiritual growth is John B. Cobb, Jr. The following remarks are indicative of his whole approach:

Christians have historically given more attention to will than to imagination. Too often imagination is identified with fantasy and dismissed as an irrelevant distraction from the real affairs of the world. Viewed in this way it sometimes lives up to these expectations instead of performing its supremely important work of confronting every what-is with what-might-be. Without imagination ethics degenerates into casuistry, and religion into a means of attaining ends it does not shape.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>81</sup>Hart, p. 192.

<sup>82</sup>Cobb, p. 136.

Amos Wilder is another who challenges theology to relate itself not only to the philosophical ideas of the time but also to its symbolic life and creative impulses.

While theology properly takes the form of clear thinking about God, the faith, and the world, it has a basic substratum of imaginative grasp on reality and experience. The great theologians have always had this plastic and dynamic element in their thought, and it has been continuous with and nourished by the social imagination of their epoch. . . . In our time when the theological tradition has lost so much of its cogency it is particularly important that it should redefine itself in relation to the dominant myths, dreams, images of the age, that is, with the contemporary quest-patterns of a changing world.<sup>83</sup>

Hopefully this represents the current trends in theological thinking in the minds of many who are or will be entrusted with the task of spiritual leadership throughout the world. If not, then the church may not have the vitality needed to capture the imagination of those involved in the contemporary quest-patterns of a changing world.

### Implications

Hope is hearing the melody of the future.  
Faith is to dance it.<sup>84</sup>

If faith is "found to be imagination grown up; imagination developed and tested and confirmed in experience,"<sup>85</sup> then we can dance to the melody of the future with the help of our imaginations. While affirming that the implications of this

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<sup>83</sup>Wilder, p. 25.

<sup>84</sup>Alves, p. 195.

<sup>85</sup>Leslie D. Weatherhead, Psychology and Life (New York: Abingdon Press, 1935), p. 87.

thought are infinite, we will explore the broad spectrum of possibilities for spiritual growth and conclude by focusing more specifically upon the use of imagination in the creative act.

Strengthening the spirit is an aspiration directed by images of what might be. It is the work of the imagination to "confront every what-is with what-might-be".<sup>86</sup> This is the melody of the future that Christians cannot afford to miss hearing or fail to respond to by dancing to its tune.

We can never hope to enter into life creatively without the use of our imaginations. We will not be able to change "what-is" to "what-might-be" unless we are willing to imagine the limitless possibilities of the future. Imagination is the hope of our future. It is the suspicion that "the frontiers of the possible are not determined by the limits of the actual..."<sup>87</sup>

The church can ill afford to miss or ignore this important aspect of the human psyche. Its very life depends on the creative force of every person's imagination, both individually and as individual-in-community.

The spiritual health of the church is so very important to the creative power of individuals, for only in full community with others can the spirit attain its proper strength.

The 'community of faith' is that social reality where creativity is incarnated. It gains flesh and bones. In this community the future takes on space in the time still present: it is the 'objectification of the Spirit,' the

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<sup>86</sup>Cobb, p. 136.

<sup>87</sup>Alves, p. 194.

place where the creative insight and the creative intention become creative power.<sup>88</sup>

If the church should fail to recognize and appropriate this open and imaginative attitude toward the future-lived-in-the-present, it should not be surprised that the results are an institution steeped in stagnation, lifelessness, and gloomy self-pity.

When imagination fails, doctrines become ossified, witness and proclamation wooden, doxologies and litanies empty, consolations hollow, and ethics legalistic.<sup>89</sup>

Whitehead claims that when any society lacks imaginative force, "staleness then sets in. Repetition produces a gradual lowering of vivid appreciation. Convention dominates. A learned orthodoxy suppresses adventure."<sup>90</sup> This clearly explains what happens when we do not encourage the use of imagination in the communities that proclaim "good news" as central to its message of faith. They never allow that good news to be manifested in the realities of life.

We need not repeat past mistakes. We can take the "leap of imagination" that reaches beyond the safe limits of learned rules of taste.<sup>91</sup> We can look within the depths of our souls and find new sources of strength and novel possibilities for the future. The imagination is a God-given capacity as important as will, reason, and all other aspects of the psyche. We only need to rescue it from the mothballs of disuse to discover the

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<sup>88</sup>Ibid., p. 198.

<sup>89</sup>Wilder, p. 2.

<sup>90</sup>Alfred North Whitehead, Adventure of Ideas (New York: Macmillan 1933), p. 277.

<sup>91</sup>Ibid., p. 279.

benefits and joys of living imaginatively and creatively as God's children.

Living imaginatively will allow us to enter a Biblical story; we can imagine ourselves in it and moving with it, and thus come to appropriate its meaning for our lives. We can listen to our dreams, which are a natural expression of the inner world, in order to better understand and interpret all of the events in our lives. We can enter into meditation and allow the images that we meet there to speak to us, "realizing that they are given to us to be used like building materials in our lives."<sup>92</sup>

It is important that we understand the value of images within because this is the only way we will ever be able to make much of an impact on the world around us. We are dependent upon imagination because "it is seldom possible for something to take place, particularly in the outer world, until someone has imagined it spiritually within."<sup>93</sup> Rubem Alves expresses this concept so well when he claims that "the future can be created according to the shape love takes in the imagination."<sup>94</sup>

So, whether we are talking about the individual or the community of faith, it is important to understand and unlock the powers of imagination if we are to grow spiritually and have any creative influence in the world in which we live.

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<sup>92</sup>Kelsey, p. 219.

<sup>93</sup>Ibid., p. 220.

<sup>94</sup>Alves, p. 98.

## CHAPTER 2

## PEACEMAKING: A CHRISTIAN ETHIC FOR THE NUCLEAR AGE

The nuclear age in which we live makes the prospects of a war fought with existing weapons unimaginable and unthinkable. Yet, we and other nations are in an arms race that could result in a war that would destroy life as we now know it. Never before has "the question of war, and of Christianity's understanding of it been more relevant in the history of humankind than it is today."<sup>1</sup> The arms race, with all its possible implications, is perhaps the number one issue facing the church in our time. Yet, we may find ourselves somewhat ill-prepared to address this crucial problem. Nevertheless, there are hopeful signs that the faith communities throughout the world are awakening from the slumber of complacency to find that they have a responsibility to speak, to act and to witness.

In order to understand more fully the church's reluctance to face the issue with strength of conviction, and its lack of preparation for this moment in history, we will review the church's position on issues of war and peace from the early church down to the present. Hopefully, with this background as a perspective, we can explore ways that this understanding enables and guides the church in facing the task before us.

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<sup>1</sup>Albert Marrin, ed., War and the Christian Conscience (Chicago: Regnery, 1971), p. 3.

In conclusion, we will examine the possibilities of peacemaking as a viable alternative to old and existing attitudes regarding war and peace. In this age of nuclear weapons and ever increasing preparation for war, we must envision a Christian ethic that will enable us to venture forth with renewed hope for the future, to dream new dreams, to envision new possibilities, to speak with a prophetic voice, and not be timid. The hour is much too crucial for timidity or uncertainty regarding our Christian responsibility.

In our time when the atomic bomb threatens to end the atomic era, the ethical problems of war and peace cry urgently for re-examination. For the Christian this must mean a re-study of the implications of the Christian gospel.<sup>2</sup>

Bainton continues by saying that as a basis for world peace, this is not altogether adequate because all peoples and religions of the earth are involved.<sup>3</sup> It is a time for all faith communities to re-examine their responsibilities, and to unite in a total effort of peacemaking.

The nuclear age has brought bewilderment and division among Christians. In order to understand where we are on the issue of war and peace, we must understand how we arrived. As we review the church's attitude toward this issue in history, we will discover that its several different and sometimes opposite attitudes were not always directly a result of intentional reflections on the gospel, but were often a reflection of the

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<sup>2</sup>Roland H. Bainton, Christian Attitudes Toward War and Peace (New York: Abingdon Press, 1960), p. 13.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

society in which they existed or of the influence of other cultures.

In the beginning, the church was not concerned with worldly matters. "Historically, Christianity evolved from groups with the characteristics of pacifistic, world-renouncing sects into a church with quasi-imperial qualities."<sup>4</sup> When finally the church emerged from three hundred years of abstention from politics, the "gap in the New Testament ethic at the point of politics was supplied by borrowings from Judaism and the classical world, notably stoicism."<sup>5</sup> This meant that the Christian ethic of war was not specifically Christian. It was borrowed from others, namely either Hebrew or Greek, along with influences from the society in which it existed.

Basically, the church has held three different positions regarding war and peace; pacifism, the just war, and the crusades or "holy war." Of these three different positions that emerged in Christian history, the earliest was pacifism.<sup>6</sup> Even though these three attitudes emerged in the order listed, they often existed alongside one another, though usually one was more dominant than the others.

The early church was basically pacifist to the time of Constantine. Although pacifism has had many different meanings down through the ages, for the early church it was usually seen

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<sup>4</sup>Marrin, p. 5.

<sup>5</sup>Bainton, p. 14.

<sup>6</sup>Robert McAfee Brown, Making Peace in the Global Village (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1981), p. 41.



as an attitude of withdrawal from worldly life.

Pacifism has commonly despaired of the world and disassociated itself either from society altogether, or from political life, especially from war.<sup>7</sup>

This was especially true of the early pacifist. The church was not engaged in the life of the society in which it existed. There was little involvement in the affairs of government or politics.

When the church emerged from this attitude of withdrawal, it found itself living in the Constantine era of acceptance, thus terminating the pacifist period in church history. It was now the accepted religion of the state, and this meant new obligations to the empire. Later on, when the peace and stability of the Roman Empire were threatened by the invasion of barbarians from the north, Christians began to argue that there might be times when they could be justified in waging war, if certain specified criteria were met. This position came to be called the doctrine of "the just war".<sup>8</sup>

A third position which emerged in the Middle Ages was known as the crusade or the holy war. This attitude was based on the "unquestioning participation of the Christian on the assumption that God's will was being served."<sup>9</sup>

For the purpose of this paper, I would like to examine these three different attitudes toward war and peace in the reverse order in which they emerged in the history of the church.

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<sup>7</sup>Bainton, p. 15.

<sup>8</sup>Brown, p. 41.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid.

The crusade or the "holy war" position is the one which is probably the least acceptable to the Christian today, but it is important for us to understand its origin and purpose in order to realize more fully why we still have certain confusions when addressing the issue of war and peace. The origin of the crusades was taken in part from the "holy wars" of the Old Testament, although in Christian history they did not emerge to any great extent until the Middle Ages, around the 11th Century.

Initially its purpose was to bring order to a suspicious and hostile Europe, but quickly the crusade was turned upon the Islamic Turkish infidels. To wage war upon non-Christians was seen as a righteous endeavor.<sup>10</sup>

Although the Crusades brought a certain unity to Christendom, they also gave the soldiers an excuse to violate to a greater extent the codes of the just war theory. The Church, of course, did not approve of such behavior and tried to keep war within the framework of law, but this was not always possible. The very nature of war and its purpose often led to acts of barbarism. It was, after all, a "holy war" and the "belief that the enemy is already damned is not conducive to chivalry."<sup>11</sup>

The medieval theologians were not aware that the crusade has written a new chapter in the ethic of war. They could accommodate the crusade to the doctrine of the just war, because by common consent the crusade was not fought to convert the infidel but only to protect the passage of pilgrims to the Holy Land; this at any rate was the initial objective. There was latent a fundamental difference, however. The purpose was not to recover stolen goods nor to repel an invasion, but to vindicate a right of religion under a foreign jurisdiction. This was after all a war of faith.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>10</sup>William W. Rankin, The Nuclear Arms Race (Cincinnati: Forward Moving Press, 1981), p. 86.

<sup>11</sup>Bainton, p. 115.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., p. 114.

Even though it is the least acceptable attitude toward war, the crusade or holy war is still a part of modern day thinking. The justification for many wars has been based on the premise that was used in the days of the crusades; that the war is fought in order to bring peace. This is surely a reflection or attitude that was reinforced during the crusades when "a war was conducted under the auspices of the Church for a holy cause--the cause of peace."<sup>13</sup> How little different this rationale sounds than the rationale that many use even yet today. To fight for peace is a remnant idea left in our consciousness from the days of the crusades. World War I and II are examples of the crusading war, and that mentality is still alive and well this very day.

The just war theory was developed by St. Augustine, Bishop of Hippo in North Africa. Augustine was well-trained in Greek thought and drew mainly upon Plato, Aristotle and then Cicero, rather than upon the life or teachings of Jesus. He developed this theory in a systematic way as a response to the problem of a church threatened by barbarians.<sup>14</sup> There are at least six criteria for a war to be "just," depending upon the authority quoted. To simplify what could be a rather lengthy list, I will draw from those listed by Robert McAfee Brown because they will give the main ingredients necessary for a war to be just according to this theory.

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<sup>13</sup>Ibid., p. 111.

<sup>14</sup>Rankin, p. 86.

- 1) The war must be declared by a legitimate authority.
- 2) It must be carried out with a right intention; its purpose must be to promote peace.
- 3) The war must be undertaken only as a last resort. It must be a last resort to resolving conflict.
- 4) It must be waged on the basis of the principle of proportionality. The relationship between ends and means must be proportionate.
- 5) The war must have a reasonable chance of success.
- 6) It must be waged with all the moderation possible. Particular care must be taken to see that civilian non-combatants and prisoners of war are not tortured or killed.<sup>15</sup>

Although the crusades became the dominant Christian war ethic during the Middle Ages, the just war theory was resurrected in the 16th century. In its current form, the just war theory is the result not only on Augustine's thought, but is also the work of Thomas Aquinas and Francisco di Vitoria in the medieval period, the Jesuit Francisco Suarez during the Counter-Reformation, and Hugo Grotius in the 17th century. This theory was used to justify both World Wars.<sup>16</sup>

One twentieth century religious figure who supported the resurrection of Augustine's original theory of just war was Paul Ramsey. Ramsey wrote several books advocating a better just war doctrine, claiming that the theory had been misused and

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<sup>15</sup>Brown, pp. 42-43.

<sup>16</sup>Rankin, p. 87.

misinterpreted. Ramsey criticized the ethics that determined its actions on some future good, and claimed that "we have understood morality to be a matter of prudential calculation."<sup>17</sup> In his criticism of the current Protestant ethic, he asserts that "we must affirm that a wholly future-facing agape-ethic--amounts to the suspension of a great part of morality."<sup>18</sup>

The problem with Ramsey's thinking is that it is neither consistent nor logical. In attempting to make a case for just wars, he frequently goes in circles and then back again, often contradicting his own arguments. He also strongly supports Augustine's basic requirement for a just war that insists that any war declared by the highest official is justifiable.

When this condition is fulfilled, when the highest official authority has initiated a war and made a judgment as to its necessity for the preservation of the laws of its peace, the Christian citizen finds himself called into responsible action because of the alliance of his will (and love) that constitutes him with the rest of the multitude a people.<sup>19</sup>

According to Ramsey, to follow the law (the ruler) is justifiable for the Christian, and, therefore, does not do violence to his conscience. This is to claim that one must always obey the law regarding war without questioning the morality of this action. In this argument Ramsey is at least consistent, for he has already advocated the suspension of

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<sup>17</sup>Paul Ramsey, War and the Christian Conscience (Durham: Duke University Press, 1961), p. 3.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., p. 4.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid., p. 39.

morality for the "future-facing agape-ethic."

Ramsey was not the only theologian who strongly supported the just war theory. In fact, he often based his ideas upon the thinking of Reinhold Niebuhr. The thesis of Niebuhr's book, Christianity and Power Politics, is "that the failure of the Church to espouse pacifism is not apostasy, but is derived from an understanding of the Christian Gospel which refuses simply to equate the Gospel with the 'law of love.'"<sup>20</sup> Although Niebuhr had earlier been influenced by Kirby Page, the great pacifist of the 20th Century, he soon decided to follow a different path. He was very critical of the pacifist point of view, claiming that "most modern forms of Christian pacifism are heretical."<sup>21</sup>

During the second World War, many were left without any theories that could clearly support such a war. Usually, when one excludes pacifism or the crusade idea, the only remaining position in historic Christian thought is the ethic of the just war. This was not the case for many in this war. In the words of some, it was not a just war; it was just war.<sup>22</sup> It was surely a trying time for Christian ethics; it was a time of much division and confusion and a fitting prelude for the nuclear age.

The 20th century was also a time for the revival of pacifism. Of the three basic positions on war and peace that

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<sup>20</sup>Reinhold Niebuhr, Christianity and Power Politics (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1952), p. 3.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., p. 5.

<sup>22</sup>Bainton, pp. 221-222.

emerged in Christian history, pacifism was the earliest.<sup>23</sup> This position in the early church was not absolutist; there were some Christians in the army and they were not excluded from communion.<sup>24</sup> It was, however, the dominant attitude of the early Christians.

The principles which led Christians to accept pacifism have been different at different times. In the early church, it was not so much a rejection of war, as it was a fear of idolatry.<sup>25</sup> The outstanding characteristic of the medieval pacifist is their return to the Bible (the Sermon on the Mount) for their primary support. For them it was the law of Christ.<sup>26</sup> During the Reformation, the "emphasis was upon suffering, the necessity for suffering, in the Christian ethic."<sup>27</sup> For the Quakers and other historic peace churches in this country, it was "a new respect for personality and a new faith in the capacities of man. . . ."<sup>28</sup> It was the dignity of persons, a humanist position, that brought many to this acceptance of pacifism, and many were Christian humanists who advocated this position.

Because of the variety of principles that have supported a pacifist point of view, there are many different meanings given to this attitude. Some are negative, as the withdrawal from society of the early Christians, which conveys a passive stance.

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<sup>23</sup>Brown, pp. 40-41.

<sup>24</sup>Bainton, p. 66.

<sup>25</sup>Geoffrey R. Nuttall, Christian Pacifism in History (Oxford: Blackwell, 1958), p. 1-2.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., p. 27.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., p. 41.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid., p. 57.

For others, pacifism is an absolute. It derives its conviction "not from the negative abhorrence of nor from the utopian dream of a lotus-eater's world, but from the fact and significance of Jesus Christ."<sup>29</sup> But all the varieties of pacifism have had in common an emphasis upon love, and there has always been at least a small remnant within the church who have been pacifist for one reason or another.

It's interesting to note that all of the basic theories or positions regarding war are based upon the premise that this insures peace, or brings peace, or keeps the peace. And they all justify their positions by a rationale that they believe to be basically Christian. After all, these are all positions or attitudes held by the Church at one time or another in its history. The important question is how do these theories or attitudes fit into the nuclear age? Are they useful, obsolete, irrelevant, adjustable, or ridiculous? Can only one of them be the right one for our time, or can they all be used as guidelines for a Christian ethic in the nuclear age?

The nuclear age in some way changes all the rules, all of the criteria that once supported these various theories of war. In another way, it sharply clarifies meanings that were once very flexible, meanings which allowed one to rationalize and bend them to meet certain needs and to fulfill certain purposes. The crusades were justified on the basis of defending the faith and

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<sup>29</sup>Charles Earle Raven, The Theological Basis for Christian Pacifism (New York: Fellowship Publications, 1951), p. 25.



ridding the world of its enemies. Since the first World War, Christians who undertake to justify modern war do so through an "attenuated version of the doctrine of the just war . . ."<sup>30</sup>

According to this theory, a just war must be based on the principle of proportionality . . . meaning that the good ends must always outweigh the evil means. In an age when nuclear weapons can in a few moments destroy much of life, millions at a time, it is rather difficult to imagine that such a war could be justified on the principle of proportionality. How could the end, with much of life destroyed and the remaining life left to cope with the aftermath of nuclear bombs, justify the means? The end and the means are both horrendous! A just war must also use all possible moderation in its conduct; it must seek to save the lives of the noncombatants. In a nuclear war, there can be no distinction between human lives. In a given area, all will be destroyed. The idea of "a limited nuclear war" is not an idea that most of us can accept. No matter how limited, countless civilians will be killed or maimed, with the effects of radiation doing irreversible damage to millions of those not killed initially.

Another principle of the just war theory states that no war is just unless there is a probability of its success. Who can win in a nuclear war? Who would want to? Although there are those who tell us that this kind of war is winnable, there are

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<sup>30</sup>Bainton, p. 243.

thousands of voices that deny this possibility.

Every President from Dwight D. Eisenhower to Jimmy Carter has tried to remind us that there could be no such thing as victory in a war fought with such weapons. So have a great many other emminent persons.<sup>31</sup>

In even a brief re-examination of the just war theory, it is "difficult if not impossible to make a case for a 'just' war today on the basis of the traditional criteria."<sup>32</sup> There is no just war in the nuclear age, and if this is accepted by those who wish to follow this position, then they might be willing to join forces with others who are seeking to be peacemakers in this nuclear age.

Pacifism has meant many different things in different times, and not all today would agree on its meaning, but it is beginning to take on a new image.

Pacifism today has moved beyond its earlier connotation in the negative sense of excluding the self from the hard struggles, by a simplistic appeal to principle. Pacifism today is more and more conceived in the broader sense of active, courageous, even sacrificial peacemaking.<sup>33</sup>

This more active role taken by the pacifist needs to be understood in light of the history of pacifism. Not always passive by any means, pacifists have in the past been "tiny and relatively insignificant groups, needing all their energies to survive at all and practically never in a position to bring

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<sup>31</sup>George F. Kennan, "On the Nuclear Standoff and Its Insanity," Los Angeles Times, (May 24, 1981).

<sup>32</sup>Brown, p. 55.

<sup>33</sup>Rankin, p. 87.

pressure to bear, beyond the silent pressure of an often suffering witness."<sup>34</sup> It is encouraging and challenging that this is no longer so.

The pacifist influence is essential for this nuclear era. Its time has come. The "seeds" planted in the early church, nourished and nurtured by remnant groups down through the ages, are beginning to sprout and grow.

Pacifism, which may once have seemed idealistic and unrealistic as a human stance, looks increasingly like the most hardheaded and realistic position imaginable.<sup>35</sup>

The task of peacemaking is not and will not be an easy one. But it is essential if we are to live creatively in this age and hope for a tomorrow that will see all of God's creation living in harmony with one another . . . or perhaps living at all. There are no easy answers or solutions, but there are new possibilities, other alternatives to the existing world of threats and fear in which we all must now live.

We have learned from the church's history, as it has tried to understand its faith, that the church has found new answers for new situations. Its own self-understanding has not always been determined by a reflection on the gospels or upon its own history; it has not always followed the guidance of the Holy Spirit. We can and must determine our own response to the situation in which we live. Our task is obviously before us, and it is "to recognize clearly the reality of our present condition

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<sup>34</sup>Nuttall, p. 68.

<sup>35</sup>Brown, pp. 47-48.

in the world and, with a vision shaped by our Christian heritage, to discern how we ought to live responsibly under the lordship of Christ."<sup>36</sup>

If our first task is to recognize clearly the reality of our present situation, then we must listen to the voices that are now not only crying in the wilderness, but in the streets of our cities, on the front pages of our newspapers (or at least in the editorial comment pages), in volumes of books, and even speaking from the pulpits of our churches. There are voices from all over the world, warning us of our present and dangerous situation.

For more than thirty years wise and farseeing people have been warning us about the futility of any war fought with nuclear weapons and about the dangers involved in their cultivation. . . . So much has already been said. What is to be gained by reiteration? What good would it now do? Look at the record. Over all these years the competition in the development of nuclear weaponry has proceeded steadily, relentlessly, without the faintest regard for all these warning voices. We have gone on piling weapon upon weapon, missile upon missile, new levels of destruction upon old ones.<sup>37</sup>

The officials of the land have not heeded these warnings, but then, neither have most of the other people, and this includes persons in the churches and synagogues. The World Council of Churches did issue a statement in 1961, but was greatly criticized, and thus, largely ignored by its constituents.

We call attention to the fact that the use of nuclear weapons

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<sup>36</sup>Rankin, p. 89.

<sup>37</sup>Kennan.

can certainly more than ever before cause such a scale of devastation and consequences so incalculable that they cannot be balanced by any conceivable advantage to mankind.<sup>38</sup>

Not only are we faced with devastating consequences should these weapons be used, but by their very existence and continued production we are spending billions of dollars that could and should be appropriated elsewhere. Thousands of persons in our world are ill-fed and ill-housed, and their needs are literally being ignored while we give priority to military "needs." We are literally taking food out of the mouths of children in order to build enough bombs to destroy much of humankind. We are engaged in the most massive military spending in our nation's history.

I see a vacuum-cleaner effect in operation, sucking scarce funds away from humane programs at home and in Third World nations in order to build up in response to the rumors of war.<sup>39</sup>

In effect, our nation is determining the extent of our response to human needs by the demands of our military budget. Our priorities are being determined by the demands for military defense, and "against nuclear destruction there is no military defense."<sup>40</sup> These are some of the realities that we must face as Christians living in a nuclear age.

In order to respond to these grim realities, we must begin to advocate a different way of thinking, a different way of looking at our world. Robert McAfee Brown asserts that although

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<sup>38</sup>Donald F. Durnbaugh, (ed.) On Earth Peace (Elgin, IL: Brethren Press, 1978), p. 192.

<sup>39</sup>Robert Lee, "Rumors of War," Christian Century 98:35 (November 4, 1981), 1125-27.

<sup>40</sup>Bainton, p. 40.

it is not absolutely necessary to be pacifist to be concerned about the nature of modern warfare, one needs to "be a concerned citizen of the global village to realize that the very nature of modern warfare jeopardizes everything for which the global village stands,"<sup>41</sup> and it is the task of peacemaking Christians "to insist that we think and act as citizens of the global village."<sup>42</sup>

This task will not be easy. As Albert Einstein remarked when he recognized the historical significance of the atomic bomb, the bomb has changed everything but our way of thinking.<sup>43</sup> The necessity of thinking differently, of conceiving of ourselves as living in a global village, is essential for our very existence.

The corporate nature of human existence is daily being impressed upon us. No individual, no group, no nation can contract out of the human family or isolate itself from the rest. The destinies of those who inhabit this closely-knit planet are now seen to be as inseparable as the destinies of a group of travelers on a spaceship. It follows, then, that our ethical thinking must be guided by a conception of a virtue that is corporate or even global in its scope, and such a virtue is peace.<sup>44</sup>

The church's response to the present realities of its situation is always the work of Christian ethics, and "Christian peacemaking rests upon the ethical principles that life is good,

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<sup>41</sup>Brown, p. 42.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid., p. 20.

<sup>43</sup>Rankin, p. 89.

<sup>44</sup>John Macquarrie, The Concept of Peace (New York: Harper & Row, 1973), p. 1.

that the creation is good, that each individual is precious to God, that all of us are part of one human family, and that room always must be made between persons for love, forgiveness, and reconciliation."<sup>45</sup> From this perspective, the Christian peacemakers will need to work at building up the human community and tearing down the myths built by the military complexes of the world.

It is most heartening that there is evidence that this is slowly beginning to happen. Christians who have always been pacifist and those who are non-pacifist are joining forces as peacemakers because they realize the seriousness of the threats of living in a nuclear era where there are rumors of war. They have caught a glimpse of a vision of new possibilities, and accept responsibility for moving toward that vision, a vision and hope where all can live in one global community without this preparation for destruction. Some spoke with prophetic voices before the dawning of this nuclear age, such as Kirby Page in his book, War: Its Causes, Consequences and Cure, published in 1923:

The present situation demands extreme measures. Let the churches of America say to their own government and to the peoples of the earth: We feel so certain that war is now un-Christian, futile and suicidal that we renounce completely the whole war system.<sup>46</sup>

For others, it took the realities of a nuclear age, a continual build-up of nuclear weapons, excessive military spending, and

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<sup>45</sup>Rankin, p. 91.

<sup>46</sup>Fey, Harold, E. (ed.) Kirby Page: Social Evangelist (Nyack, NY: Fellowship Press, 1975), p. 131.

rumors of war before they were compelled to speak to the fact that we as Christians have not only a right but a responsibility to witness to our faith. Georgia Harkness spoke to this issue in the 1950's.

There is a foundation for peace, not very dependable, but nevertheless existing, in the very fact that global war now means annihilation, the suicide of mankind.<sup>47</sup>

The voices are louder than ever before. The church, or at least some of its representatives, are willing to speak to the moral issue of war as never before in its history. From the Pope to the minister in the pulpit, bishops and archbishops and national and regional leaders, there are many voices proclaiming that the church must understand this situation, reflect on its responsibility in light of the gospel, and act accordingly.

The Archbishop of San Francisco, John R. Quinn, made a pastoral statement in response to the threat of nuclear destruction:

My brothers and sisters, not only the peace of the world but the very survival of the human experiment is at stake. If we accept the inescapable conclusion that, as the Church clearly teaches, nuclear weapons and the arms race are essentially evil, what kind of response are we called upon to make?<sup>48</sup>

In a letter sent to all pastors in this country, the Council of Ministers of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the

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<sup>47</sup>Georgia Harkness, "Working Together for Peace," in To Combine Our Efforts for Lasting Peace: A Symposium (Cincinnati: Methodist Church, Board of Missions, Literature Department, 1955), p. 17.

<sup>48</sup>John R. Quinn, "Instruments of Peace, Weapons of War," Christian Monitor (October 8, 1981).



United States and Canada asked that the contents of a letter for peace be read in all of the churches during worship services on Christmas Sunday, 1981. The following is an excerpt from that letter:

We are concerned that where any nuclear war once was unthinkable, some speak now of limited nuclear war as an option. We are concerned that while peace demands arms limitation at the very least, the world's arsenals are growing at an alarming rate. . . . We call upon you to join us to study, to pray, to work and to risk in the interest of true peace, and the justice that makes true peace possible.<sup>49</sup>

There has always been a small minority of Christians who have continually witnessed to peace, but never before have so many groups in our churches and synagogues met to study and act. Most major denominations have adopted "Peace and Justice" as priorities for their work and witness. Church leaders and others have joined together to work politically for such things as nuclear freeze initiatives on state ballots, demonstrations, rallies, and conferences to raise the consciousness of everyone, and their voices have been heard and are being heard around the world. The "peace rallies" in Europe, however derided by the press, have been a tremendous witness to the concern of humankind for all of creation.

This is only the beginning. To say "no" to nuclear war and preparations for war does not mean that Christians have finished. The work is only begun.<sup>51</sup> Peacemaking is a hard,

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<sup>49</sup>Letter to pastors from Conference of Ministers, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), 1981.

<sup>51</sup>Rankin, p. 91.

difficult, almost impossible task, but one that can no longer be ignored.

The major task of the church as the peacemaking community is not "to bind up the wounds of a bleeding world," though it may need to continue to do that simply because there are still so many open wounds. The major task of the church is rather to be the embodiment of a creation that will make it unnecessary for people to leave one another bleeding in the first place.<sup>52</sup>

This is a task that will entail much effort and commitment on the part of all who are willing to participate.

We must learn to listen, to respond with as much openness and creativity as possible, when we are presented with a picture of the world and of ourselves that will be very threatening to us, since it will imply the need for drastic changes if that world is to become a tolerable dwelling place for the vast majority of the human family.<sup>53</sup>

We must also be willing to begin this process of building a peacemaking community and not insist on seeing the end results. This will mean tremendous investment of time, energy, and commitment with many disappointments and set-backs without the assurance that we will ever see our visions become realities. Georgia Harkness reminds us that "we do not need in every case to see the outcome. . . . All we are required to do is to work together with our best wisdom and in faith, hope and love."<sup>54</sup> Our task is to plant the "seeds" of peace, trust that others will tend and nourish them, and have faith that in time they will grow and become a reality. This is the lesson that we learned from

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<sup>52</sup>Brown, p. 110.

<sup>53</sup>Ibid.

<sup>54</sup>Harkness, p. 25.

our history.

From the assurance of those convictions, we can indeed set ourselves to the task of embodying in our lives as peacemakers the vision of a global community grounded in the conviction that God is the God of all persons, and that God has sent Jesus Christ so that all may have life and have it more abundantly--no one excepted, everyone accepted.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>55</sup>Brown, pp. 111-112.

## CHAPTER 3

## THE PROPHETIC VISION

If the real task of imagination is to change every "what-is" to "what-might-be," and if the foremost critical issue of our time is peacemaking, then it is of extreme importance that we explore how prophetic imagination and peacemaking embrace one another in hope for the future. Therefore, it is the thesis of this paper that imagination is the key to the needed transformation that we must make in order to critically, hopefully, and fully address the issue of peacemaking in the nuclear age.

In order to do this, we must understand the role of prophetic imagination in our Biblical history from Moses, down through the prophets, into the life and ministry of Jesus. We must search for important clues and insights related to our prophetic task that will enable us to begin planting the seeds of peace. We need new visions and a renewed sense of our responsibility as the people of God. We need to grasp the realization that prophetic ministry is not just a model for the Israelites and early Christianity, but also a challenging and energizing model for our ministry in today's threatening world.

If we do not discover a way to address our task we may become overwhelmed and paralyzed by the enormous and vast threat of a nuclear holocaust. We will become paralyzed for lack of a vision that could give us hope . . . hope that we can influence

the future, and this will lead to despair and immobility and paralysis.

Walter Wink claims that this paralysis can be overcome and that "perhaps the key lies in visualization."<sup>1</sup> We must be able to visualize new possibilities, new forms and structures that do not lead to destruction. In order to accomplish this we must take certain steps and actions.

The first step towards transformation, after all, is a consciousness of what is lacking; the second is an awareness that there are 'leagues' who feel the same; the third is a recognition that barriers can be broken through. Human beings do have the capacity to go beyond created structures in order to create others; and to recognize this is to have a sense of what it signifies to be free.<sup>2</sup>

The first step is to face reality in a criticizing way. Hiding or pretending that certain facts and situations do not exist merely because we refuse to recognize them is sheer folly. This will not change the situation or cause it to disappear. In fact, it will only insure its inevitability and its lasting effect upon our lives. The second step is the awareness that others feel the same which energizes us to discover that there is hope for the future. This will free us to use our time and energy to change what-is to what might-be. This, in turn, will free us to consider new possibilities and to use our imaginations in creating a new future of hope and joy.

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<sup>1</sup>Walter Wink, "Nuclear Paralysis," Christian Century 99:7 (March 3, 1982), 235.

<sup>2</sup>Maxine Green, "Imagination and Freedom" (An Unpublished Paper Presented at the School of Theology at Claremont, May, 1982), p. 2.

It is also necessary that the task of prophetic ministry be understood from within our Biblical tradition. According to Walter Brueggeman, the task first of all is to understand the claims of tradition and bring those face to face with the claims of our present situation.

The task of prophetic ministry is to nurture, nourish, and evoke a consciousness and perception alternative to the consciousness and perception of the dominant culture around us.<sup>3</sup>

By studying the prophets of Israel we can discern what tradition has to tell us about alternative consciousness and perceptions, and by grasping our present situation dominated by fear and mistrust, we can begin to nurture and nourish a new consciousness among one another. This can revitalize our faith communities, and give new hope to those in despair over the realities of this nuclear age.

The prophets did this by criticizing and thus dismantling the dominant structures of their culture. We must be willing to do likewise. This was always done, though, with the hope of energizing others by evoking an alternative way of thinking and perceiving reality. We cannot address our present situation without nourishing alternatives, else we will only encourage despair and paralysis. This must serve to energize persons and communities "by its promise of another time and situation toward which the community of faith may move."<sup>4</sup> And this is the work of

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<sup>3</sup>Walter Brueggemann, The Prophetic Imagination (Philadelphia: Fortress Press), 1978, p. 13.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid.

imagination; to project beyond and to create alternatives.

In the task of peacemaking, it is important to address the alternatives of prophetic imagination, and to visualize the scope of peacemaking. It is not just the absence of war; it involves the struggle for justice because whatever threatens peace is unjust, and whatever fosters justice is an act of peacemaking.<sup>5</sup> The vision of shalom, of wholeness, focuses on the broader issue and involves all of the interrelated concerns that must be addressed. Robert McAfee Brown embraces this concept of shalom when he asserts that "it is the task of peacemaking Christians to insist that we think and act as citizens of the global village."<sup>6</sup> These are the images that we shall consider as alternatives to the current vision given to us by unimaginative and blind leadership.

If suffering prepares the soul for vision,<sup>7</sup> then we must suffer through the realities of an ever threatening world, a world where nuclear weapons and their stockpiling have become a way of life; a world where the consciousness of the vast majority is buried in numbness and an unwillingness to think the "unthinkable," and to imagine the possibilities of a nuclear war; a war to end all wars, a war to end life as we know it. This is not an easy or pleasant endeavor. In fact, it is a horrifying, gruesome, and frightening experience which is easier to ignore or

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<sup>5</sup>Robert McAfee Brown, Making Peace in the Global Village (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1981), p. 15.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 20.

<sup>7</sup>Rubem A. Alves, Tomorrow's Child, (New York: Harper & Rows, 1972), p. 201.

reject than to face. "But until we do face the enormity of this horror, we will continue to trust the vision of our blind leaders."<sup>8</sup>

The task of prophetic ministry is to enable us to do this criticizing which confronts the present reality and to emerge with energizing hope. This is not an easy task and it is made even more difficult because the dominant culture does not encourage. In fact, it cannot even tolerate this kind of self-criticism.

I suggest that the dominant culture, now and in every time, is grossly uncritical, cannot tolerate serious and fundamental criticism, and will go to great lengths to stop it. Conversely, the dominant culture is a wearied culture, nearly unable to be seriously energized to new promises from God. We know, of course, that none of us relishes criticism, but we may also recognize that none of us much relishes energizing either, for that would demand something of us.<sup>9</sup>

These words by Brueggeman surely best describe our society and indeed our churches. For not only is the culture weary, but our congregations are also weary. That is why it is absolutely necessary for us to reach back into our faith tradition for guidance and direction if we are to prepare for a prophetic ministry that can hold together criticism and energizing, for neither by itself is faithful to our best tradition.

The ministry of Moses offers the best paradigm for our task. His life represents a radical break with the social

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<sup>8</sup>Wink, p. 236.

<sup>9</sup>Brueggemann, p. 14.



reality of his time. The story of the Exodus is so familiar to us that we have perhaps "become insensitive to the radical and revolutionary social reality that emerged because of Moses."<sup>10</sup> It is important to note that Moses not only criticized the politics of oppression and exploitation, but also the static religion that had numbed the Israelite people to a complacent acceptance of the status quo. It is not only our prophetic ministry to confront and criticize the dominant culture, but also to expose the complacency of our religious thinking. When the church cannot or does not involve itself in ultimate criticism of the dominant culture, then it must inevitably lend its support to those systems of oppression and war that it claims to reject.

How we think theologically about an issue should be our first consideration, since theology grows out of the situation in which we find ourselves. We are called upon to start with the situation, and see what theological conclusions it forces upon us.<sup>11</sup> This calls us to find an alternative theology and an alternative society. This is where our prophetic ministry begins.

We must start with the "bad news" of our situation. This was for the prophets the task of prophetic criticizing, and what some call facing reality. As this reality is confronted, we will be forced to grieve about our present condition, but this is where real criticism begins. That is why we cannot continue to

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<sup>10</sup>Ibid., p. 15.

<sup>11</sup>Brown, p. 62.

ignore what is happening in our world. We live in a society in which we are told to accept things as they are. We are led to believe, and indeed are constantly being reminded, that this is the only reality possible. It is therefore our task to discern the truth of our situation and to see what is happening all about us. In order to do this, we must come to terms with its seriousness.

In Jonathan Schell's recent book, The Fate of the Earth, we are confronted with the horrible, unimaginable possibilities of total destruction. Even though no one can predict for certain what could happen in the event of an all-out nuclear confrontation we have to consider the worst of all possibilities, the destruction of all life on earth, and proceed to consider our responsibilities in light of those speculations. A description of a full-scale holocaust is necessary if we are to engage in any meaningful discussion of alternatives.

Such an account, which in its nature must be both technical and gruesome, cannot be other than hateful to dwell on, yet it may be only by descending into this hell in imagination now that we can hope to escape descending into it in reality at some later time.<sup>12</sup>

We live in a world of nuclear madness. We are engaged in an arms race that cannot be won in the name of being "realistic." There are countless resources available to give an account of this reality, and any of them will do, because the information is so vast. Briefly it looks like this:

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<sup>12</sup>Jonathan Schell, Fate of the Earth (New York: Knopf, 1982), p. 5.

We have the military capability to kill everybody in the world twelve times, so we want to increase that killing capacity to fifteen or sixteen times. We have 30,000 nuclear weapons in our stockpile, and Russia has at least half that many, and yet we accede without quibbling when military men, whose way of life depends on it, tell us that we need still more nuclear weapons. We are told that building more weapons will make our situation safer, when each weapon we build actually makes it more precarious. We talk about the death of 140 million people in a pre-emptive strike as an 'acceptable' loss of life.<sup>13</sup>

This is only a small but significant part of our reality and many other issues are related. There is world hunger while we, the U.S., who are six percent of the world's population, continue to consume forty percent of the world's resources.<sup>14</sup> In the meantime, our economy is in shambles because of our massive military spending. The defense budget for 1982 was over \$226 billion. This gigantic figure is beyond our imaginations so we need to find appropriate ways to visualize its meaning. Robert Lee, in an article in the Christian Century, portrays this awesome fact for us with vivid images.

To portray graphically how much a billion dollars is, a billion one-dollar bills placed end to end would stretch from here to the moon--and back! A billion seconds ago was 1945. A billion minutes ago, Christ was alive. A billion hours ago was the age of the dinosaurs. Yet it takes only 15 hours to spend a billion dollars in Washington, D.C.<sup>15</sup>

This massive military spending is robbing us and the people of the world. Everytime we spend money for weapons we are literally starving peoples of the world. Although many are

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<sup>13</sup>Brown, p. 62.

<sup>14</sup>Ibid., p. 17.

<sup>15</sup>Robert Lee, "Rumors of War," Christian Century 98:35 (November 4, 1981), 1126.

worried that a nuclear bomb may be used in the future, what a lot of people don't realize is that we are already getting 'nuked' by a military budget that is throwing the economy out of whack.

We must face the reality of what our system is doing to us now, and the possible results of this ever increasing madness that we know as the arms race. It is possible that we could end all life on earth, as portrayed by Jonathan Schell in The Fate of the Earth.

In extinction by nuclear arms, the death of the species and the death of all the people in the world would happen together, but it is important to make a clear distinction between the two losses; otherwise, the mind, overwhelmed by the thought of the deaths of the billions of living people, might stagger back without realizing that behind this already ungraspable loss there lies the separate loss of the future generations.<sup>16</sup>

Neither of these realities is pleasant to contemplate. That is why we have most often avoided this critical analysis of our present situation. We have been too appalled at the possibilities that seem inevitable, and we are a society of people too numbed to consider other alternatives. We have indeed been told that we have no other alternatives and we have believed this because we lack a prophetic vision that would enable us to grapple with other alternatives.

We have been content to address particular social issues from time to time, and to make some small insignificant changes in our society. The prophets of old were not accustomed to addressing just a particular social issue in order to bring about

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<sup>16</sup>Schell, p. 115.

social transformation, but rather to dismantling the consciousness that undergirded and made such a social order possible. We must be willing to address preparations for war and peacemaking, not as a social issue, as critical as it is, but rather as a way of life. Preparing for war, and this is surely what we are doing, is a way of life, and one that should not be acceptable to us as a people of faith.

Peacemaking is indeed a spiritual struggle because "it is a battle for the soul of humanity. Today peacemaking is a struggle between two faiths, each very real, each elusive."<sup>17</sup> Richard Barnet elaborates on this struggle between two faiths, the faith system of security, and faith in God, as the struggle between a fear system and a system based on love.

A society in which the ruling ideology becomes increasingly one of fear, setting neighbor against neighbor in a competition ever more severe for limited resources--all of this has to be seen as the reality with which we contend.<sup>18</sup>

This is the consciousness that undergirds our society--a consciousness of fear that has made security its pagan god. Yet, the fact is, the "more weapons we build, the less secure we are; therefore we will build more weapons."<sup>19</sup> This is the illogical "logic" that permeates the thinking of our culture. Therefore, we must contend with the reality that we actually live under the power of rationalized insanity. This was the royal madness that

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<sup>17</sup>Richard Barnet, "Battling this Present Darkness, the Spiritual Struggle of Peacemaking," Sojourners 10:10 (October 1981), 14.

<sup>18</sup>Ibid., p. 15.

<sup>19</sup>Brown, p. 62.

confronted the people of Israel at the time of Solomon's reign. After Moses had struggled to establish a community of liberation and had done so effectively, King Solomon traded this "vision of freedom for the reality of security."<sup>20</sup>

This faith system of security based on fear must be addressed by the alternative prophetic consciousness. There are certain questions that we can and must ask ourselves if we are to penetrate this kind of logic. We need to ask how we can have enough freedom to imagine and articulate a real historical newness in our situation. According to Brueggemann's interpretation of prophetic criticizing, we need not ask if this newness is politically practical or economically viable. As a matter of fact, we cannot begin with these questions else we have already conceded to the royal consciousness.

We need to ask not whether it is realistic or practical or viable but whether it is imaginable. We need to ask if our consciousness and imagination have been so assaulted and co-opted by the royal consciousness that we have been robbed of the courage or power to think an alternative thought.<sup>21</sup>

Our theological starting point is to realize that we are living in a society based on this fear system and accept this madness as the reality with which we begin. This will enable us to ask the necessary questions that will hopefully penetrate our numbness. We will need to assume the "moral madness" of the prophets who were frequently considered crazy because they did

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<sup>20</sup>Brueggeman, p. 38.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., p. 44.

"not conform to the norms of their society."<sup>22</sup>

The numbness that we encounter in our society is an attitude based on not wanting to know. If we don't know what might happen then we can pretend that it might not happen for a while longer. This is the wholesale denial and numbness that needs to be addressed by the prophetic imagination whose task "is to cut through the numbness, to penetrate the self-deception, so that the God of endings is confessed as Lord."<sup>23</sup> Brueggemann suggests that this task has three parts:

1. To offer symbols that are adequate to the horror and massiveness of the experience which evokes numbness and requires denial.

2. To bring to public expression those very fears and terrors that have been denied so long and suppressed so deeply that we do not know they are there.

3. To speak metaphorically but concretely about the real deathliness that hovers over us and gnaws within us.<sup>24</sup>

Although these suggestions are offered in response to the royal consciousness in the days of Solomon, there couldn't be any more appropriate words for us now. Our numbness and self-deception have been left fairly well undisturbed until recently. Our response to the horror about us has been to carry on with life as usual as though nothing was wrong.

Thoughts of the nuclear peril were largely banned from waking life, and relegated to dreams or to certain fringes of society, and open, active concern about it was restricted to certain "far-out" people, whose ideas were on the whole not so

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<sup>22</sup>Brown, p. 63.

<sup>23</sup>Brueggemann, p. 49.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., pp. 49-50.

much rejected by the supposedly sober, "realistic" people, in the mainstream as simply ignored.<sup>25</sup>

If we are not to be ignored forever, we will have to speak metaphorically, but concretely, in the language of grief and pathos as the ultimate form of criticism, and take Jeremiah as the model for our prophetic imagination and ministry. Jeremiah embodies the alternative consciousness of Moses in the face of wholesale denial. He articulated what was in fact present in the community whether the people acknowledged it or not. Jeremiah grieved because no one would listen or see what was so transparent to him. This is certainly the grief that we endure for a time until the dominant consciousness of our society can be penetrated.

Like Jeremiah we will have to face the royal consciousness which insists on "peace, peace" when there is no peace. Like Jeremiah we are called to a prophetic ministry that must speak to a people with glazed eyes that look and do not see, with most so encased in their own world of fantasy that their numbness will not easily be broken.

The clue that we must not miss in the prophetic ministry of Jeremiah is that he was engaged in a battle for language in an effort to create a different epistemology out of which another community might emerge.<sup>26</sup> Rubem Alves claims that language plays an important and vital part in the way we perceive the world and events around us. All of our facts come to us in the form of

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<sup>25</sup>Schell, pp. 150-151.

<sup>26</sup>Brueggemann, pp. 51-59.



language, and the words we use partly determine our human experience. In other words, language has the power to define our world and ultimately conditions what we do.

Hence we see the importance of language in the control of imagination and therefore as a means of political control. Language tends to define what is possible and what is not, what gives pleasure and what does not.<sup>27</sup>

If we are to be prophetic and to engage in envisioning new possibilities, we must evoke a new consciousness by calling into question the dominant and oppressive consciousness that permeates our society. In prophetic ministry we must understand the importance of language, and engage in the language of imagination and freedom. We must also break the barriers of numbness and complacency by naming the reality and participating in the grief that must come before the newness. The first task of prophetic imagination and ministry is to be engaged in criticizing a dominant culture and consciousness which do not allow freedom and imagination, and thus forbid the creative act which could bring about newness of life.

The second task of prophetic ministry is to present an alternative consciousness that can energize the community to fresh forms of faithfulness and vitality, providing hope for the future in the process.

The royal consciousness leads people to despair about the power to new life. It is the task of prophetic imagination and ministry to bring people to engage the promise of newness that is at work in our history with God.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>27</sup>Alves, p. 38.

<sup>28</sup>Brueggemann, pp. 62-63.

In order to engage in this task we must embrace the language and vision of hope. We must also clearly understand and acknowledge the meaning and power of hope. Rubem Alves, in his provocative book, Tomorrow's Child, explains the meaning and power of hope:

It is the presentiment that imagination is more real and reality less real than it looks. It is the hunch that the overwhelming brutality of facts that oppress and repress is not the last word. It is the suspicion that reality is much more complex than realism wants us to believe; that the frontiers of the possible are not determined by the limits of the actual, and that in a miraculous and unexpected way life is preparing the creative event which will open the way to freedom and resurrection.<sup>29</sup>

Hope is the refusal to accept things as they are. The prophets of hope must follow the same guidelines in the language of hope and energizing that they did in the task of criticizing. We will have to offer symbols of hope that are adequate to contradict the situation of hopelessness. The expression of hope in our words, speech, and ideas helps to shape consciousness and define reality. We should bring to public expression those very hopes and yearnings that have so long been denied and speak concretely about the possibility of real newness. In redefining our present situation through the language of hope, we can bring a new kind of energy, for the language of hope is nothing less than the language of amazement.<sup>30</sup>

In beginning to use the language of hope and amazement we

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<sup>29</sup>Alves, p. 194.

<sup>30</sup>Brueggemann, pp. 68-69.

are also freeing ourselves to imagine new possibilities and alternative realities. In this freedom we are energized to use our imaginations just as the prophets, Moses, Jesus, and others have done in the past. Ezekiel's vision of the dry bones (Ezekiel 37) provides for us a pattern that we could follow today. As God spoke to Ezekiel, asking if these dry bones could live, he is speaking to us about our despair, and our loss of hope. Until we have faced the real status of our existence as one of death (dry bones) we will not be able to live and have hope for the future. In the vision of a restored Jerusalem, or in the vision of Shalom, God is trying to get the people to visualize a new beginning. "Faith is practicing the future,"<sup>31</sup> and visualizing alternatives is a way of expressing our faith.

The "good news" of the gospel is that things don't have to be the way they are. Jesus' life and ministry manifested this "good news" to those who were living without hope because they believed that the future was just an extension of the present. To those who believed that there was no newness in life, the birth of Jesus brought the old order to an end, and established a new way of life. The teachings of Jesus evoked radical energy, and were shattering, opening, and inviting because they indicated possibilities previously defined as impossibilities. His actions were a scandal for they violated propriety, reason, and good public order.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>31</sup>Wink, p. 236.

<sup>32</sup>Brueggemann, pp. 102-103.

Jesus' call for us to be peacemakers is indeed shattering, opening, and inviting. To be peacemakers, we must shatter old perceptions of reality and ways of life. Our call to be peacemakers also opens up new possibilities and choices. It is a call that invites us to a prophetic task of finding alternatives to a future that now offers only despair and hopelessness. Accepting such a call is not an easy choice because we first of all have the enormous task of convincing ourselves and others that we are not now on a course that leads to peace. Then we must engage in visualizing new possibilities for the future, and begin living out or practicing those alternatives.

To begin with we can visualize the churches of North America organizing the mightiest grass-roots campaign in our hemisphere's history . . . Beyond that we can begin visualizing agreements that will lead to genuine reductions and decommissioning of in-place nuclear weapons as a step toward total nuclear disarmament . . . We must let ourselves be possessed by a vision of a world in which all nuclear arsenals have been effectively outlawed, just as slavery was successfully outlawed over 100 years ago.<sup>33</sup>

Visualizing alternatives is a way of practicing the future, and what we can visualize we can nourish and nurture to full-blown realities. Imagine what even a small amount of the funds now being spent on defense could accomplish if diverted to research and development aimed at finding and perfecting alternative sources of energy to free us from dependency on depletable fossil fuel. Visualize how all the human needs such

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<sup>33</sup>Wink, pp. 236-237.

medicine, shelter, nutrition, education and transportation could benefit from only a fraction of the world's military spending.<sup>34</sup>

In an article written by Richard Barnet in Sojourner's magazine in October, 1981, he visualized the following:

Next spring at the United Nations there is going to be another special session on disarmament. Why would it not be possible to have a million people in the streets of New York to demonstrate to the people who came there that the people of God and the people of the United States care about security and that they care about preserving the world?<sup>35</sup>

On a sunny day in June, 1982, this became a reality even though many said it was an impossibility. Participating in this tremendous event was very energizing. Even though its importance and significance was minimized by both the press and the administration, its impact on the consciousness of not only those who participated, but also on others throughout the world, will be felt for a long time.

We can visualize a world without war as the means to settling differences. Although we are told that this is an impossible and impractical dream, we can begin to think differently. Wars are meant to be won, and in this nuclear age there are no winners. The logic of war is so illogical that it must indeed be seen as some sort of mass insanity.

To visualize a world without war will also mean that we must visualize a political system that is radically different

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<sup>34</sup>Lee, p. 1127.

<sup>35</sup>Barnet, p. 17.

than the one we now possess which is based on sovereignty.

National sovereignty lies at the very core of the political issues that the peril of extinction forces upon us. Sovereignty is the "reality" that the "realists" counsel us to accept as inevitable, referring to any alternative as "unrealistic" or "utopian."<sup>36</sup>

To visualize a world without war without also visualizing a world based on alternative structures is useless. The system of sovereignty must be seen as the basis for our defense, and this system must be exposed as not only oppressive and nationalistic, but also as a threat to our very existence.

The threat of nuclear confrontations is the horrible nightmare that calls us to seriously consider "oneness" on this globe. At no other time in history has this fact been so apparent. Prophetic imagination calls us to accept the reality of our "oneness." We are all interrelated, and what happens to one human soul happens to us all. We are not separate beings, existing in separate places. We live in a global community whether we accept this fact or not. The first step to accepting this reality is to visualize that we are all a part of one global village, and to act accordingly.

Remembering that the task of prophetic imagination and ministry is to nurture, nourish, and evoke a consciousness and perception alternative to the consciousness and perception of the dominant culture around us, we have no better place or time to begin than now. Now, with the threat of destruction all about

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<sup>36</sup>Schell, p. 218.

us, is the time to think and act as citizens of the global village.

We do not need to frantically search for a place to begin building this global village. It is already given. The church is the place to begin.

It is provided by the community, the church, of which we are a part. The church at its best is not a parochial, regional, class, or national community. It is itself already a foretaste of the global village, with members from every race and class and nation. It proclaims a God who is not the God of the few, or even the God of the many, but the God of all.<sup>37</sup>

In our churches all across the land we can and must embrace the vision of Shalom. Shalom is the biblical vision "of one community embracing all creation. Shalom comes only to the inclusive, embracing community that excludes none."<sup>38</sup> It is an enduring vision of wholeness and of vital hope, and one that is "most eloquently expressed in times very much like our own, when resources of faith to endure are hardly available."<sup>39</sup> Shalom is an "announcement that God has a vision of how the world shall be and is not yet."<sup>40</sup> And the church's task is to discuss God's vision of what the world shall be and resolve to live toward that vision.

These are troubled but exciting times; a time of unique hope and new possibilities. If imagination is born out of struggle and grief, then this is the perfect time for its birth. Although we are living in an exciting time, it is a very

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<sup>37</sup>Brown, pp. 20-21.

<sup>38</sup>Walter Brueggemann, Living Toward A Vision (Philadelphia: United Church Press, 1976, 1982), p. 16.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid., p. 23.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid., p. 39.

dangerous time, a time of much horror and enormous change, but "one that we need to see as having the seeds of a very different kind of world order."<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>41</sup>Barnet, p. 16.



## CHAPTER 4

## THE SHALOM CONGREGATION

The biblical imperative of peacemaking is at the heart of the Christian gospel. Making peace and therefore being among the blessed is a teaching of Jesus that applies in the life and mission of the church. It is not an easy task to pursue for it involves struggle in which risks must be taken. It means dealing with difficult and complex questions of nuclear power control, armaments, peacekeeping mechanisms based on the equality and oneness of nations under God, injustices, freedom, racism, discrimination, and economic inequality. It means envisioning new possibilities which involves giving up some long-held presuppositions, not only about the world, but also about the message of the gospel.

It is clear that the church's usual theology of sin and forgiveness is not an adequate basis upon which to think biblically about problems of international peace. It is obvious that the churches which historically have thought of sin, guilt and forgiveness in a narrow sense have settled for a very individualistic articulation of the gospel.<sup>1</sup>

The biblical vision of Shalom is the basis upon which the church can . . . and must pursue the task of its prophetic ministry in peacemaking. This vision is more than the absence of war. Shalom is total well-being, wholeness, fulfillment, and

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<sup>1</sup>Walter Brueggemann, Living Toward a Vision (Philadelphia: United Church Press, 1976, 1982), P. 86.

joyous harmony. It involves the love of neighbor and the acceptance of the fact that we are living in a global village.

It is out of this imperative for peacemaking that the Shalom Congregations Program was born. It is one way that a congregation can actively, prayerfully, and intentionally become involved in the task of peacemaking in ways that go beyond the usual faith affirmations. It becomes faith in action. It is the praxis of peacemaking. The Shalom program is a simple but powerful concept. Because it is grounded so firmly in biblical concepts, this idea is more warmly and enthusiastically received than most conventional peace study/action activities. It seems at the outset to be less threatening to the life of the faith community, but its power is set loose when the vision of Shalom begins to permeate the life of that congregation.

The Shalom Congregations Program was developed in response to and in hopes of implementing the "Peace with Justice" Priority adopted by the General Assembly of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) meeting in Anaheim, California, July 31 to August 5, 1981. Resolution #8148 Concerning Priorities of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), 1982-1985 states:

The church is called by the one who blesses peacemakers to determine what being peacemakers means in all the works of the church...The issues of peace are local as well as regional and national and global. In dealing with these issues the church is not simply responding to a contemporary problems but living out a central element of its faith--that God wills peace. What does the church have to say that is different from what is said by government, or business, or labor, or society, which also are concerned about these matters? Peace is a part of human justice, Christian compassion and stewardship of life, and is the intended order of the world with life abundant for all God's children.

Pursuing peace is a mandate for the church because the Prince of Peace is head of the church.

Attention to contemporary issues of peace clearly mirrors the teachings of Jesus. The church in all its manifestations must place an emphasis upon peacemaking as never before because important aspects of peace confront the church and the world as never before--militarism, the continuing arms race, nuclear proliferation and possible destruction, racism, hunger, economic oppression, energy waste, economic disaster, and more. The church is called by the One who blessed peacemakers to determine what being peacemakers means in all the life and work of the church.

In implementing this priority, the General Assembly recommended that the pursuit of "peace with justice" be at the center of the mission of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and include elements of worship, study, consciousness-raising, witness, advocacy, leadership development, study, service, continuing education of ministers, and ecumenical cooperations.

After the adoption of the Peace with Justice Priority by the General Assembly, the Social Concerns Committee of the Pacific Southwest Region of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) recommended to the Regional Board of Directors the appointment of a special task force to implement this priority. The Board voted unanimously to select a Peace with Justice Committee, and I assumed the responsibility of providing staff leadership for this special committee.

The task of peacemaking had been carried largely by the Executive Committee of the Pacific Southwest Region's Chapter of the Disciples Peace Fellowship, which was not responsible to the regional church structure, but functioned rather as a fellowship of like-minded persons with a covenantal relationship to the national Disciples Peace Fellowship. It was my responsibility to give administrative leadership to this group, but it was not a regionally appointed committee, and only reported to the Social Concerns Committee as a matter of courtesy and for moral support. It was at the suggestion of this group that the regional Social Concerns Committee decided that it was time for the critical issue of peacemaking to be an integral part of the regional church structure. This would not only enable the regional manifestation of the church to be officially informed of all activities, but actually to be engaged in the struggle to discover what it means to be intentional about fulfilling the peace with justice priority of our denomination.

One of the first agenda items for the newly appointed Peace with Justice Committee was to consider the Shalom Congregations Program. The program was still in its beginning stages with only ten Disciple congregations, scattered throughout the country, exploring its viability in a pilot project, but we felt that this concept had great and powerful possibilities. The committee submitted a plan for this program to the Regional Board of Directors, who adopted it in May, 1982.

In order to participate in the Shalom program, a congregation must, by official board action, make a decision to

undertake a one-year commitment to plan, as an important and integral part of its life, involvement in worship, study and action experiences which lifts up the vision of God's Shalom. In addition to the covenant, the congregation is required to choose a representative, either lay or clergy, to participate in a training event, and to be the contact and resource person in relating to the region's Peace with Justice Committee. Each congregation must also make a six-month and a year-end report to the regional committee.

There are suggestions or guidelines for implementing this program within each congregation, although it is expected that each congregation will discover additional ways of implementation as they become energized by the vision of Shalom. A special task force or committee should be appointed by the congregational board to give direction and guidance to the program. Building this issue into the structure of the congregation's organization requires decisions by a group whose main task is to focus on this commitment. It needs to be the task of this or some responsible group of persons to keep this vision visible in the life of the congregations and to provide for its accountability.

Emphasizing the concern for peace with justice in the worship service is also an important aspect of the Shalom Program. Our corporate worship needs to express the understanding that God calls the church to a life of Shalom and through Jesus Christ we are given an example of what that means. This emphasis in our worship can be a symbol of the church's commitment to this vision.

A regular program of study on peacemaking is essential if a congregation is to fulfill its task. This study should not only involve the biblical and theological basis of peacemaking, but also the critical facts surrounding the issue. This will necessitate the often unpleasant task of prophetic criticizing of the society in which we live. It will involve becoming aware of the awesome realities of a world on the brink of nuclear disaster, of a world using resources for destruction instead of creative purposes, of a society bent on "survival and security" that makes us all less secure and at peace with one another. This consciousness-raising, along with a clearer understanding of our biblical imperative toward a vision of Shalom will be necessary in order for the church to engage fully in the task of peacemaking.

There are other ways of keeping the peace with justice issue visible in the congregation. Making books and magazines available for individual use is important, as well as displays, bulletin boards, and articles in the church's newsletter. The use of films in study groups, church school classes, fellowship dinners, and other occasions is another very effective way of keeping this issue visible as well as providing much needed information.

The church newsletter is also a way of sharing with one another about what the church is undertaking, as well as about community or regional activities. It is also an excellent way to share with other Shalom congregations when this newsletter is exchanged with other churches.

Providing counseling to those facing decisions about military service is another suggestion for the Shalom congregation. The church can offer sorely needed information about conscientious objection to those within and without the church, as this information is often less readily available than that about the options for participation in the military. Young people need the opportunity to learn about all their options and to know that their church is supportive in their decision making.

The church is also asked to encourage membership in the Disciples Peace Fellowship, an organization of individuals who are seeking to be peacemakers. This group was organized in 1935 as a community of Disciple women and men who believe that war is pagan, futile and destructive of the values for which the Christian faith stands. In their commitment to peace, members of the Disciples Peace Fellowship are united through a Covenant, although each member works out the implication of that Covenant according to her/his own conscience. Constrained by the urgency of our predicament, and our faith as Christians, the Disciples Peace Fellowship members covenant together to seek the following purposes and objectives:

1. To provide a fellowship for those members of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) who reject war as a method of settling international disputes; and who will work together to abolish war and to create the conditions of peace among peoples and nations of all races and cultures.
2. To facilitate creative fellowship in thought and action with like-minded persons in the wider Christian community.
3. To serve as a leaven within the life of our own

denomination, keeping alive the passion for peace, and pressing for positive action toward the elimination of war.

4. To give moral and financial support to conscientious objectors to war who may suffer because of conscientious opposition to war.
5. To foster the use of non-violent procedures in interpersonal and inter-group relations . . . and at the same time never to relax our concern for justice and integrity in home life, civic affairs, race relations and international contacts.

The Disciples Peace Fellowship also issues a quarterly newsletter, providing inspiration, encouragement, and resources to congregations and individuals who are engaged in the task of peacemaking.

The Shalom Congregations Program also encourages each church to work ecumenically wherever possible and to sponsor community-wide peace activities. The church should look for ways to work ecumenically for emphasis on and understanding of peace issues in the community and in other peace-related groups.

Each congregation is asked to keep a log or record of its activities, and to share those activities as appropriate with the board and the congregation. They are also asked to share with other congregations, especially those in the Shalom Program, and to submit articles for publication in the regional church's newspaper.

There will be three or four gatherings of the Shalom congregations this year for the purposes of sharing, fellowship, mutual support, resourcing of ideas, information, inspiration and energizing of one another.



Congregations that have participated in the program over the past year or so have shared some of their ideas which indicate a change of direction and a new emphasis in the life of the church. One church held a Peace Infusion Technique Workshop. Church school teachers learned ways by which a concern for peace could be "infused" into the regular teaching curriculum. The technique, taught in a five and one-half hour workshop, is useful for teachers of any age and subject.

In a sermon based on the thematic biblical passage to "make straight in the desert a highway for our God," quoted several places in both testaments, a pastor called upon the congregation to form a triple relationship by exchanging letters with a congregation in Western Europe and one in Eastern Europe. Recognizing that allies and adversaries alike are deeply concerned at the "grass roots level" with survival in the threat of the use of destructive weapons, he called for dialogue with each.

In another situation, the ministers and members of a congregation together worked to develop a curriculum of "Shalom Studies" for members of adult classes which will explore several issues related to peacemaking.

Seven churches of several denominations met together during Lent to study peace, with a Shalom congregation church hosting. Four classes were held: Economics of War and Peace, Christian Attitudes Toward War and Peace, Peacemaking in the Global Village, and Theology of Justice and Reconciliation.

These are but a few of the examples of how congregations

involved in this program have responded to their commitment to be a Shalom church. First Christian Church of Stockton, California prepared its own set of objectives. As a "Shalom Congregation" their objectives were to:

1. Involve the people of the congregation in a serious study of the relationship between peace and the Christian faith.
2. Identify contemporary examples of domestic and international conflict in order that the causes and consequences of conflict between peoples and nations can be better understood.
3. Develop programs of information and action in support of efforts to bring about domestic and world peace.

The Shalom Committee at Stockton, appointed to direct and implement these objectives, were given the following guidelines:

1. The Program should be directed toward the broadest spectrum of points-of-view in our congregation. Efforts should be undertaken to involve as many persons as possible in the programs developed by the committee.
2. In recognition of the theme of "peace," every measure must be taken to avoid creating additional conflict among persons who may not share similar opinions on the best means to achieve domestic or international peace.
3. The committee should use every available resource in our congregation, community, and nation in support of their mission.
4. The community of Stockton should become involved in every possible way in the Shalom Congregation activities as recipients of information, as participants in activities, as partners in program planning and implementation.
5. Above all, if our congregation cannot become fully and enthusiastically involved in the idea and program of the Shalom Congregation, we will not have achieved our goal of being an example for other congregations to emulate in the cause of effective action for peace.

These guidelines may not be ideal ones for a Shalom committee, but they are one example of the way a church was able to focus on this program. Others will find different means by which to fulfill their commitment to be a Shalom congregation. The important aspect of this program is that it allows and encourages each congregation to explore what it means to be a Shalom church. Each congregation, and indeed each person within that congregation, will need to explore and discover new and creative ways to invest its energies in the task of peacemaking.

In order to participate in the Shalom Congregations Program the regional church had to recruit at least five congregations and provide regional staff time to administer the program. Before the end of September, six of our congregations took official action to become a part of this program. Although I have official responsibility as the regional minister responsible for the administration of this program, the Peace with Justice committee is sharing that task with me.

Recruiting churches to participate in the program has been an interesting experience. Many congregations have responded enthusiastically to this idea. Although only six have officially become a Shalom Church, many others were and still are vitally interested in participating in this unique effort when it is offered again. Had there been more time to recruit additional churches I am certain that we could have had many more adopt the Shalom Congregations Program this year. It is our hope and our vision that we will expand the program in the very near future

and invite other congregations to participate. Our dream and our goal is to have at least twenty Shalom congregations by the end of 1983.

Very little effort was involved in this initial presentation of the Shalom program. Six congregations responded to a written invitation sent to the thirty-two churches participating in the first Regional Peace Sunday, initiated by the Peace with Justice Committee in the Spring of 1982. In four of the six, it was the minister who promoted the idea, discussing it with various committees and finally bringing it to the official church Board. In some cases, it was recommended to the Board by an official committee of the church. In others, the minister presented the program directly to the Board for its consideration. In the other two churches, a Peace Task Force already existed, and the program was presented to the Board and the congregation by those peace groups. It seems that when the minister and/or one or two members of a congregation became enthusiastic about the Shalom program, it was not met with much resistance and was adopted with very little opposition.

Many people in other congregations have asked about the program and are genuinely interested in becoming a Shalom church as soon as possible. It is my plan to do some personal groundwork through ministers and laypersons in about twenty of our churches in the next few months. We are also printing articles relating experiences of the six Shalom churches in the monthly regional denominational newspaper in hope of encouraging others to seriously consider this excellent program.

It is also our intention to invite all interested congregations to join in one of the Shalom gatherings in the late spring or early summer. It is our hope that the enthusiasm and vitality of the existing Shalom congregations will encourage and inspire others to participate.

The Shalom Congregations Program is more than just another bureaucratic program; it is an energizing movement of the spirit. It is an opportunity for those concerned with the task of peacemaking to not only actively engage in that task but to have that spirit permeate the life and work of their congregations through intentional study, worship and action. It is the hope of the future. The vision of Shalom can become a reality in the lives of people, the seeds for peace can be planted squarely in the midst of congregations throughout the land, and these seeds can be nourished, nurtured, and evoked to full-blown realities of peacemaking. The vision of Shalom is our prophetic hope for a world made whole.

Hope is hearing the melody of the future,  
Faith is to dance it.<sup>2</sup>

The Shalom Congregations Program is one very concrete and visible way to hear the melody and start the dance of peacemaking in churches throughout the world.

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<sup>2</sup>Rubem A. Alves, Tomorrow's Child (New York: Harper & Row, 1972), p. 195.

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